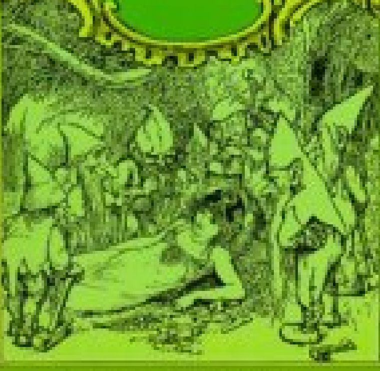
The OLIVE FAIRY BOOK

EDITED BY

ANDREW LANG



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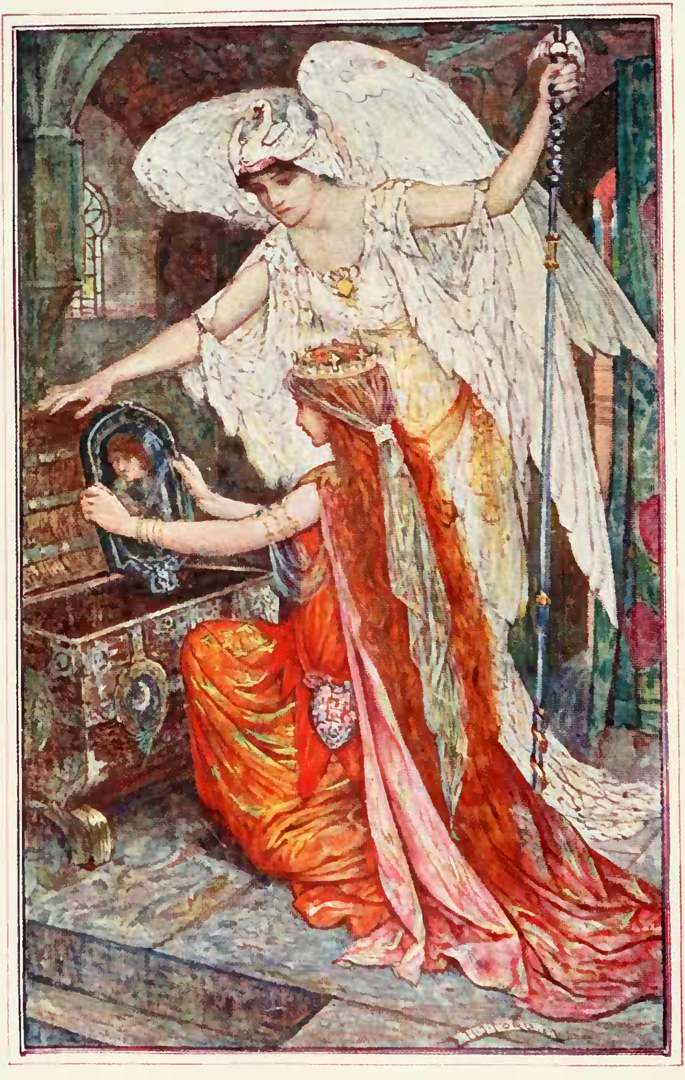

THE BLUE PARROT.

[*See p.* 16.

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OLIVE FAIRY BOOK

EDITED BY

ANDREW LANG

WITH EIGHT COLOURED PLATES AND
NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS BY H. J. FORD

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PREFACE

Many years ago my friend and publisher, Mr. Charles Longman, presented me with *Le Cabinet des Fées* ('The Fairy Cabinet'). This work almost requires a swinging bookcase for its accommodation, like the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and in a revolving bookcase I bestowed the volumes. Circumstances of an intimately domestic character, 'not wholly unconnected,' as Mr. Micawber might have said, with the narrowness of my study (in which it is impossible to 'swing a cat'), prevent the revolving bookcase from revolving at this moment. I can see, however, that the Fairy Cabinet contains at least forty volumes, and I think there are about sixty in all. This great plenitude of fairy tales from all quarters presents legends of fairies, witches, geni or Djinn, monsters, dragons, wicked stepmothers, princesses pretty or plain, princes lucky or unlucky, giants, dwarfs, and enchantments. The stories begin with those which children like best—the old *Blue Beard*, *Puss in Boots*, *Hop o' my Thumb*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Toads and Pearls*. These were first collected, written, and printed at Paris in 1697. The author was Monsieur Charles Perrault, a famous personage in a great *perruque*, who in his day wrote large volumes now unread. He never dreamed that he was to be remembered mainly by the shabby little volume with the tiny headpiece pictures—how unlike the fairy way of drawing by Mr. Ford, said to be known as 'Over-the-wall Ford' among authors who play cricket, because of the force with which he swipes! Perrault picked up the rustic tales which the nurse of his little boy used to tell, and he told them again in his own courtly, witty way. They do not seem to have been translated into English till nearly thirty years later, when they were published in English, with the French on the opposite page, by a Mr. Pote, a bookseller at Eton. Probably the younger Eton boys learned as much French as they condescended to acquire from these fairy tales, which are certainly more amusing than the *Télémaque* of Messire François de Salignac de la Motte-Fénelon, tutor of the children of France, Archbishop Duke of Cambrai, and Prince of the Holy Roman Empire.

The success of Perrault was based on the pleasure which the Court of Louis XIV. took in fairy tales; we know that they were told among Court ladies, from a letter of Madame de Sévigné. Naturally Perrault had imitators, such as Madame d'Aulnoy, a wandering lady of more wit than reputation. To her we owe *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Yellow Dwarf*. Antony Hamilton tried his hand with *The Ram*, a story too prolix and confused, best remembered for the remark, 'Ram, my friend, begin at the beginning!' Indeed, the narrative style of the Ram is lacking in lucidity! Then came *The Arabian Nights*, translated by Monsieur Galland. Nobody has translated *The Arabian Nights* so well as Galland. His is the reverse of a scientific rendering, but it is as pleasantly readable as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* would be if Alexandre Dumas had kept his promise to translate Homer. Galland omitted the verses and a great number of passages which nobody would miss, though the anthropologist is supposed to find them valuable and instructive in late scientific translations which do not amuse. Later, Persian Tales, Tales of the Sea, and original inventions, more or less on the fairy model, were composed by industrious men and women. They are far too long—are novels, indeed, and would please no child or mature person of taste. All these were collected in the vast Fairy Cabinet, published in 1786, just before the Revolution. Probably their attempt to be simple charmed a society which was extremely artificial, talked about 'the simple life' and the 'state of nature,' and was on the eve of a revolution in which human nature revealed her most primitive traits in orgies of blood.

That was the end of the Court and of the Court Fairy Tales, and just when they were demolished, learned men like the Grimms and Sir Walter Scott began to take an interest in the popular tales of peasants and savages all the world over. All the world over the tales were found to be essentially the same things. *Cinderella* is everywhere; a whole book has been written on *Cinderella* by Miss Cox, and a very good book it is, but not interesting to children. For them the best of the collections of foreign fairy tales are the German stories by the Grimms, the *Tales from the Norse*, by Sir G. W. Dasent, (which some foolish 'grown-ups' denounced as 'improper'), and Miss Frere's Indian stories. There are hundreds of collections of savage and peasant fairy tales, but, though many of these are most interesting, especially Bishop Callaway's Zulu stories (with the Zulu versions), these do not come in the way of parents and uncles, and therefore do not come in the way of children. It is my wish that children should be allowed to choose their own books. Let their friends give them the money and turn them loose in the book shops! They know their own tastes, and if the children are born bookish, while their dear parents are the reverse, (and this does occur!), then the children make the better choice. They are unaffected in their selections; some want Shakespeares of their own, and some prefer a volume entitled *Buster Brown*. A few—alas, how few!—are fond of poetry; a still smaller number are fond of history. 'We know that there are no fairies, but history stories are *true!*' say these little innocents. I am not so sure that there are no fairies, and I am only too well aware that the best 'history stories' are not true.

What children do love is ghost stories. 'Tell us a ghost story!' they cry, and I am able to meet the demand, with which I am in sincere sympathy. Only strong control prevents me from telling the last true ghost story which I heard yesterday. It would suit children excellently well. 'The Grey Ghost Story Book' would be a favourite. At a very early age I read a number of advertisements of books, and wept because I could not buy dozens of them, and somebody gave me a book on Botany! It looked all right, nicely bound in green cloth, but within it was full of all manner of tediousness.

In our Fairy Cabinet, which cannot extend to sixty volumes, we have aimed at pleasing children, not 'grown-ups,' at whom the old French writers directed their romances, but have hunted for fairy tales in all quarters, not in Europe alone. In this volume we open, thanks to Dr. Ignaz Künos, with a story from the Turks. 'Little King Loc' is an original invention by M. Anatole France, which he very kindly permitted Mrs. Lang to adapt from *L'Abeille*.

Major Campbell, as previously, tells tales which he collected among the natives of India. But the sources are usually named at the end of each story, and when they are not named children will not miss them. Mrs. Lang, except in cases mentioned, has translated and adapted to the conditions of young readers the bulk of the collection, and Mrs. Skovgaard-Pedersen has done 'The Green Knight' from the Danish. I must especially thank Monsieur Macler for permitting us to use some of his *Contes Arméniens*.[1]

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[1] Paris: Ernest Leroux, Editeur.

CONTENTS

PAGE

Madschun 1

The Blue Parrot 9

Geirlaug the King's Daughter 27

The Story of Little King Loc 43

'*A Long-bow Story*' 64

Jackal or Tiger? 71

The Comb and the Collar 87

The Thanksgiving of the Wazir 103

Samba the Coward 108

Kupti and Imani 119

The Strange Adventures of Little Maia 131

Diamond cut Diamond 144

The Green Knight 152

The Five Wise Words of the Guru 167

The Golden-headed Fish 178

Dorani 188

The Satin Surgeon 198

The Billy Goat and the King 211

The Story of Zoulvisia 216

Grasp all, Lose all 234

PAGE
The Fate of the Turtle 242
The Snake Prince 247
The Prince and Princess in the Forest 256
The Clever Weaver 276
The Boy who found Fear at last 279
He Wins who Waits 289
The Steel Cane 301
The Punishment of the Fairy Gangana 305
The Silent Princess 318

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

COLOURED PLATES

(*Engraved and printed by Messrs. André & Sleigh, Ltd., Bushey*)

The Blue Parrot (p. 9) . . . . . . *Frontispiece*
'Stay here, and you shall be king' . . . . *to face p.* 60
The Princess and the Wolves in the Forest . „ 90
The Boy in the Valley . . . . . . „ 206
The Ascent of the Crystal Tower . . . „ 222
'Queen of Snakes, give me back my husband!' „ 254
The Sea-maiden with a wicked Face . . „ 284
The Princess chooses . . . . . . „ 290

FULL-PAGE PLATES

Ismenor brings Lino to Riquette . . . *to face p.* 12
The Magician's Wife whistles to the Parrot . „ 22
The Dragon Discomfited . . . . . . „ 28
'Will you lend me your ox, fair maiden?' . „ 38
Abeille finds herself among the Little Men . „ 46
King Loc carries Abeille away from her Mother . . . . „ 56
The Bunniah's Story . . . . . . „ 66
'Quick! prince! quick! the time is flying, comb me at once' . . . . „ 94
Samba found skulking by his Wife . . „ 110

The Princess changes clothes with the Goose-girl . . . . to face p. 162
'What think you, O mortal, of my fair and lovely wife?' . . . . ,, 170
The Prince has pity on the Gold-headed Fish ,, 178
'He never could persuade her to say a single word' . . . . ,, 188
The Princess gets her Letter . . . . . ,, 200
'I accept your challenge. Mount, and follow me. I am Zoulvisia.' . . . . . . ,, 218
The Witch and her Snakes . . . . . ,, 226
The Princess of Arabia released from the Iron Pillar . . . . ,, 262
The Boy secures the Bracelet . . . . . ,, 280
Blind rage filled the heart of the watcher . . ,, 296
'The seven veils fell from her' . . . . ,, 332

ILLUSTRATIONS IN TEXT

PAGE
Love at first sight 2
How the Birds were brought to the Sultan 5
The Swallow brings the Note to Lino 18
Pull as he might, he could not get free 37
'Is this the man that you wish to marry?' 62
The Farmer finds the Queen weeping by the Palanquin . 73
The Unlucky Shot 75
Ameer Ali wins the Anklet 78
The Princess saves the White Fox 100
Imani attends to the Crippled Fakir 121
Imani listens to what the Monkeys say 127
Maia carried off by the Cockchafer 135
Maia and the Spiders in the Evening 141
He helped her to jump from the Swallow's back . . . 142
The Poisoned Nail 159

PAGE
The Invisible Prince goes with the Ladies 194
The King laughs at the Billy Goat 213
Suddenly the Tree rose up again and flew away . . 240
The Snake Prince visits his Wife 251
The Robber-chief catches the Queen 259
The Hawk flies away with the Lamp 271
The Silent Princess speaks at last 327

MADSCHUN

Once upon a time there lived, in a small cottage among some hills, a woman with her son, and, to her great grief, the young man, though hardly more than twenty years of age, had not as much hair on his head as a baby. But, old as he looked, the youth was very idle, and whatever trade his mother put him to he refused to work, and in a few days always came home again.

On a fine summer morning he was lying as usual half asleep in the little garden in front of the cottage when the sultan's daughter came riding by, followed by a number of gaily dressed ladies. The youth lazily raised himself on his elbow to look at her, and that one glance changed his whole nature.

'I will marry her and nobody else,' he thought. And jumping up, he went to find his mother.

'You must go at once to the sultan, and tell him that I want his daughter for my wife,' he said.

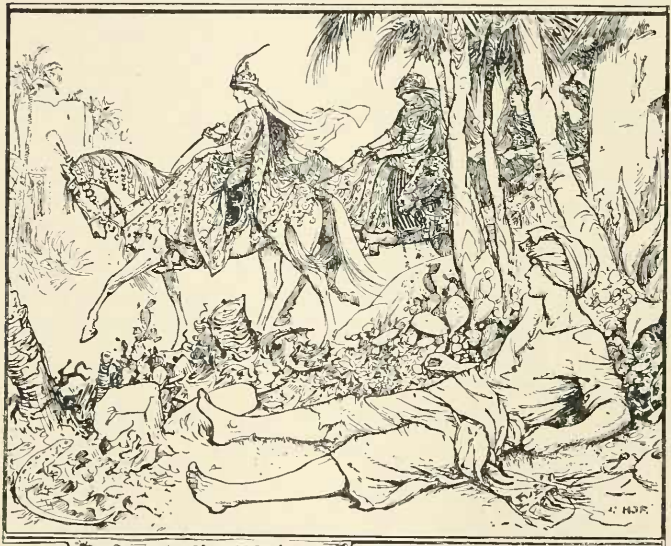
'What?' shouted the old woman, shrinking back into a corner, for nothing but sudden madness could explain such an amazing errand.

'Don't you understand? You must go at once to the sultan and tell him that I want his daughter for my wife,' repeated the youth impatiently.

'But—but, do you know what you are saying?' stammered the mother. 'You will learn no trade, and have only the five gold pieces left you by your father, and can you really expect that the sultan would give his daughter to a penniless bald-pate like you?'

'That is *my* affair; do as I bid you.' And neither day nor night did her son cease tormenting her, till, in despair, she put on her best clothes, and wrapped her veil about her, and went over the hill to the palace.

It was the day that the sultan set apart for hearing the complaints and petitions of his people, so the woman found no difficulty in gaining admission to his presence.



Love at first Sight

'Do not think me mad, O Excellency,' she began, 'though I know I must seem like it. But I have a son who, since his eyes have rested on the veiled face of the princess, has not left me in peace day or night till I consented to come to the palace, and to ask your Excellency for your daughter's hand. It was in vain I answered that my head might pay the forfeit of my boldness, he would listen to nothing. Therefore am I here; do with me even as you will!'

Now the sultan always loved anything out of the common, and this situation was new indeed. So, instead of ordering the trembling creature to be flogged or cast into prison, as some other sovereigns might have done, he merely said: 'Bid your son come hither.'

The old woman stared in astonishment at such a reply. But when the sultan repeated his words even more gently than before, and did not look in anywise angered, she took courage, and bowing again she hastened homeward.

'Well, how have you sped?' asked her son eagerly as she crossed the threshold.

'You are to go up to the palace without delay, and speak to the sultan himself,' replied the mother. And when he heard the good news, his face lightened up so wonderfully that his mother thought what a pity it was that he had no hair, as then he would be quite handsome.

'Ah, the lightning will not fly more swiftly,' cried he. And in another instant he was out of her sight.

When the sultan beheld the bald head of his daughter's wooer, he no longer felt in the mood for joking, and resolved that he must somehow or other shake himself free of such an unwelcome lover. But as he had summoned the young man to the palace, he could hardly dismiss him without a reason, so he hastily said:

'I hear you wish to marry my daughter? Well and good. But the man who is to be her husband must first collect all the birds in the world, and bring them into the gardens of the palace; for hitherto no birds have made their homes in the trees.'

The young man was filled with despair at the sultan's words. How was he to snare all these birds? and even if he *did* succeed in catching them it would take years to carry them to the palace! Still, he was too proud to let the sultan think that he had given up the princess without a struggle, so he took a road that led past the palace and walked on, not noticing whither he went.

In this manner a week slipped by, and at length he found himself crossing a desert with great rocks scattered here and there. In the shadow cast by one of these was seated a holy man or dervish, as he was called, who motioned to the youth to sit beside him.

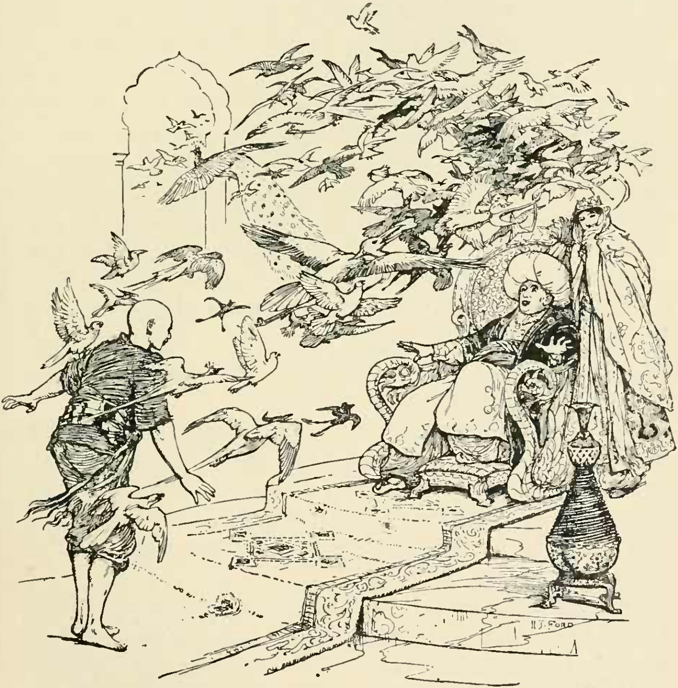
'Something is troubling you, my son,' said the holy man; 'tell me what it is, as I may be able to help you.'

'O, my father,' answered the youth, 'I wish to marry the princess of my country; but the sultan refuses to give her to me unless I can collect all the birds in the world and bring them into his garden. And how can I, or any other man, do that?'

'Do not despair,' replied the dervish, 'it is not so difficult as it sounds. Two days' journey from here, in the path of the setting sun, there stands a cypress tree, larger than any other cypress that grows upon the earth. Sit down where the shadow is darkest, close to the trunk, and keep very still. By-and-by you will hear a mighty rushing of wings, and all the birds in the world will come and nestle in the branches. Be careful not to make a sound till everything is quiet again, and then say "Madschun!" At that the birds will be forced to remain where they are—not one can move from its perch; and you will be able to place them all over your head and arms and body, and in this way you must carry them to the sultan.'

With a glad heart the young man thanked the dervish, and paid such close heed to his directions that, a few days later, a strange figure covered with soft feathers walked into the presence of the sultan. The princess's father was filled with surprise, for never had he seen such a sight before. Oh! how lovely were those little bodies, and bright frightened eyes! Soon a gentle stirring was heard, and what a multitude of wings unfolded themselves: blue wings, yellow wings, red wings, green wings. And when the young man whispered 'Go,' they first flew in circles round the sultan's head, and then disappeared through the open window, to choose homes in the garden.

'I have done your bidding, O Sultan, and now give me the princess,' said the youth. And the sultan answered hurriedly:



How the BIRDS were brought to the SULTAN

'Yes! oh, yes! you have pleased me well! Only one thing remains to turn you into a husband that any girl might desire. That head of yours, you know—it is so *very* bald! Get it covered with nice thick curly hair, and *then* I will give you my daughter. You are so clever that I am sure this will give you no trouble at all.'

Silently the young man listened to the sultan's words, and silently he sat in his mother's kitchen for many days to come, till, one morning, the news reached him that the sultan had betrothed his daughter to the son of the wizir, and that the wedding was to be celebrated without delay in the palace. With that he arose in wrath, and made his way quickly and secretly to a side door, used only by the workmen who kept the building in repair, and, unseen by anyone, he made his way into the mosque, and then entered the palace by a gallery which opened straight into the great hall. Here the bride and bridegroom and two or three friends were assembled, waiting for the appearance of the sultan for the contract to be signed.

'Madschun!' whispered the youth from above. And instantly everyone remained rooted to the ground; and some messengers whom the sultan had sent to see that all was ready shared the same fate.

At length, angry and impatient, the sultan went down to behold with his own eyes what had happened, but as nobody could give him any explanation, he bade one of his attendants to fetch a magician, who dwelt near one of the city gates, to remove the spell which had been cast by some evil genius.

'It is your own fault,' said the magician, when he had heard the sultan's story. 'If you had not broken your promise to the young man, your daughter would not have had this ill befall her. Now there is only one remedy, and the bridegroom you have chosen must yield his place to the bald-headed youth.'

Sore though he was in his heart, the sultan knew that the magician was wiser than he, and despatched his most trusted servants to seek out the young man without a moment's delay and bring him to the palace. The youth, who all this time had been hiding behind a pillar, smiled to himself when he heard these words, and, hastening home, he said to his mother: 'If messengers from the sultan should come here and ask for me, be sure you answer that it is a long while since I went away, and that you cannot tell where I may be, but that if they will give you money enough for your journey, as you are very poor, you will do your best to find me.' Then he hid himself in the loft above, so that he could listen to all that passed.

The next minute someone knocked loudly at the door, and the old woman jumped up and opened it.

'Is your bald-headed son here?' asked the man outside. 'If so, let him come with me, as the sultan wishes to speak with him directly.'

'Alas! sir,' replied the woman, putting a corner of her veil to her eyes, 'he left me long since, and since that day no news of him has reached me.'

'Oh! good lady, can you not guess where he may be? The sultan intends to bestow on him the hand of his daughter, and he is certain to give a large reward to the man who brings him back.'

'He never told me whither he was going,' answered the crone, shaking her head. 'But it is a great honour that the sultan does him, and well worth some trouble. There *are* places where, perhaps, he may be found, but they are known to me only, and I am a poor woman and have no money for the journey.'

'Oh! that will not stand in the way,' cried the man. 'In this purse are a thousand gold pieces; spend them freely. Tell me where I can find him and you shall have as many more.'

'Very well,' said she, 'it is a bargain; and now farewell, for I must make some preparations; but in a few days at furthest you shall hear from me.'

For nearly a week both the old woman and her son were careful not to leave the house till it was dark, lest they should be seen by any of the neighbours, and as they did not even kindle a fire or light a lantern, everyone supposed that the cottage was deserted. At length, one fine morning, the young man got up early and dressed himself, and put on his best turban, and after a hasty breakfast took the road to the palace.

The huge negro before the door evidently expected him, for without a word he let him pass, and another attendant who was waiting inside conducted him straight into the presence of the sultan, who welcomed him gladly.

'Ah, my son! where have you hidden yourself all this time?' said he. And the bald-headed man answered:

'Oh, Sultan! Fairly I won your daughter, but you broke your word, and would not give her to me. Then my home grew hateful to me, and I set out to wander through the world! But now that you have repented of your ill-faith, I have come to claim the wife who is mine of right. Therefore bid your wizir prepare the contract.'

So a fresh contract was prepared, and at the wish of the new bridegroom was signed by the sultan and the wizir in the chamber where they met. After this was done, the youth begged the sultan to lead him to the princess, and together they entered the big hall, where everyone was standing exactly as they were when the young man had uttered the fatal word.

'Can you remove the spell?' asked the sultan anxiously.

'I think so,' replied the young man (who, to say the truth, was a little anxious himself), and stepping forward, he cried:

'Let the victims of Madschun be free!'

No sooner were the words uttered than the statues returned to life, and the bride placed her hand joyfully in that of her new bridegroom. As for the old one, he vanished completely, and no one ever knew what became of him.

[Adapted from *Türkische Volksmärchen aus Stambul.* Dr. Ignaz Künos. E. J. Brill, Leiden.]

THE BLUE PARROT

In a part of Arabia where groves of palms and sweet-scented flowers give the traveller rest after toilsome journeys under burning skies, there reigned a young king whose name was Lino. He had grown up under the wise rule of his father, who had lately died, and though he was only nineteen, he did not believe, like many young men, that he must change all the laws in order to show how clever he was, but was content with the old ones which had made the people happy and the country prosperous. There was only one fault that his subjects had to find with him, and that was that he did not seem in any hurry to be married, in spite of the prayers that they frequently offered him.

The neighbouring kingdom was governed by the Swan fairy, who had an only daughter, the Princess Hermosa, who was as charming in her way as Lino in his. The Swan fairy always had an ambassador at the young king's court, and on hearing the grumbles of the citizens that Lino showed no signs of taking a wife, the good man resolved that *he* would try his hand at match-making. 'For,' he said, 'if there is anyone living who is worthy of the Princess Hermosa he is to be found here. At any rate, I can but try and bring them together.'

Now, of course, it was not proper to offer the princess in marriage, and the difficulty was to work upon the unconscious king so as to get the proposal to come from *him*. But the ambassador was well used to the ways of courts, and after several conversations on the art of painting, which Lino loved, he led the talk to portraits, and mentioned carelessly that a particularly fine picture had lately been made of his own princess. 'Though, as for a likeness,' he concluded, 'perhaps it is hardly as good as this small miniature, which was painted a year ago.'

The king took it, and looked at it closely.

'Ah!' he sighed, 'that must be flattered! It cannot be possible that any woman should be such a miracle of beauty.'

'If you could only see her,' answered the ambassador.

The king did not reply, but the ambassador was not at all surprised when, the following morning, he was sent for into the royal presence.

'Since you showed me that picture,' began Lino, almost before the door was shut, 'I have not been able to banish the face of the princess from my thoughts. I have summoned you here to inform you that I am about to send special envoys to the court of the Swan fairy, asking her daughter in marriage.'

'I cannot, as you will understand, speak for my mistress in so important a matter,' replied the ambassador, stroking his beard in order to conceal the satisfaction he felt. 'But I know that she will certainly be highly gratified at your proposal.'

'If that is so,' cried the king, his whole face beaming with joy, 'then, instead of sending envoys, I will go myself, and take you with me. In three days my preparations will be made, and we will set out.'

Unluckily for Lino, he had for his neighbour on the other side a powerful magician named Ismenor, who was king of the Isle of Lions, and the father of a hideous daughter, whom he thought the most beautiful creature that ever existed. Riquette, for such was her name, had also fallen in love with a portrait, but it was of King Lino, and she implored her father to give him to her for a husband. Ismenor, who considered that no man lived who was worthy of his treasure, was about to send his chief minister to King Lino on this mission, when the news reached him that the king had already started for the court of the Swan fairy. Riquette was thrown into transports of grief, and implored her father to prevent the marriage, which Ismenor promised to do; and calling for an ugly and humpbacked little dwarf named Rabot, he performed some spells which transported them quickly to a rocky valley through which the king and his escort were bound to pass. When the tramp of horses was heard, the magician took out an enchanted handkerchief, which rendered invisible anyone who touched it. Giving one end to Rabot, and holding the other himself, they walked unseen amongst the horsemen, but not a trace of Lino was to be found. And this was natural enough, because the king, tired out with the excitement and fatigue of the last few days, had bidden the heavy coaches, laden with presents for the princess, to go forwards, while he rested under the palms with a few of his friends. Here Ismenor beheld them, all sound asleep; and casting a spell which prevented their waking till he wished them to do so, he stripped the king of all his clothes and dressed him in those of Rabot, whom he touched with his ring, saying:

'Take the shape of Lino until you have wedded the daughter of the Swan fairy.'

And so great was the magician's power that Rabot positively believed himself to be really the king!

When the groom had mounted Lino's horse, and had ridden out of sight, Ismenor aroused the king, who stared with astonishment at the dirty garments in which he was dressed; but before he had time to look about him, the magician caught him up in a cloud, and carried him off to his daughter.

Meantime Rabot had come up with the others, who never guessed for a moment that he was not their own master.

'I am hungry,' said he, 'give me something to eat at once.'

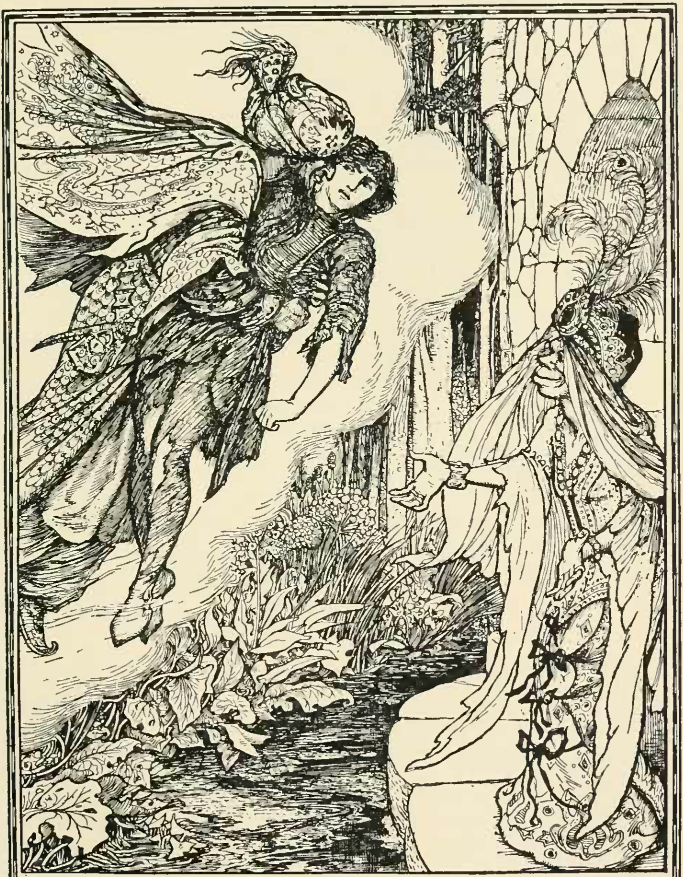
'May it please your majesty,' answered the steward, 'the tents are not even set up, and it will be at least an hour before your supper is served! We thought——'

'Who taught you to think?' interrupted the false king rudely. 'You are nothing but a fool! Get me some horse's flesh directly—it is the best meat in the world!'

The steward could hardly believe his ears. King Lino, the most polite man under the sun, to speak to his faithful servant in such a manner! And to want horse's flesh too! Why, he was so delicate in his appetite that he lived mostly on fruit and cakes. Well, well, there was no knowing what people would come to; and, anyhow, he must obey at once, if he wished to keep his head on his shoulders. Perhaps, after all, it was love which had driven him mad, and, if so, by-and-by he might come right again.

Whatever excuses his old servants might invent for their master, by the time the procession reached the Swan fairy's capital there were no more horses left, and they were forced to walk up to the palace on foot. Hiding their surprise as best they could, they begged the king to follow them, dismounting from their own horses, as he, they supposed, preferred to walk. They soon perceived the Swan fairy and her daughter awaiting them on a low balcony, under which the king stopped.

'Madam,' he said, 'you may be surprised that I have come to ask your daughter's hand in so unceremonious a fashion; but the journey is long, and I was hungry and ate my horse, which is the best meat in the world; and I forced my courtiers to eat theirs also. But for all that I am a great king, and wish to be your son-in-law. And now that is settled, where is Hermosa?'



ISMENOR brings LINO to RIQUETTE

'Sire,' answered the queen, not a little displeased as well as amazed at the king's manner, which was so different from anything she had been led to expect. 'You possess my daughter's portrait, and it can have made but little impression on you if you don't recognise her at once.'

'I don't remember any portrait,' replied Rabot; 'but perhaps it may be in my pocket after all.' And he searched everywhere, while the ladies-in-waiting looked on with astonishment, but of course found nothing. When he had finished he turned to the princess, who stood there blushing and angry, and said:

'If it is you whom I have come to marry, I think you are very beautiful, and I am sure if I had even seen your portrait I should have remembered it. Let us have the wedding as soon as possible; and, meantime, I should like to go to sleep, for your country is very different from mine, and I can assure you that after walking over stones and sand for days and days one needs a little rest.'

And without waiting for a reply he bade one of the pages conduct him to his room, where he was soon snoring so loud that he could be heard at the other end of the town.

As soon as he was out of their sight the poor princess flung herself into her mother's arms, and burst into tears. For fifteen days she had had King Lino's portrait constantly before her, while the letter from their own ambassador speaking of the young man's grace and charm had never left her pocket. True, the portrait was faithful enough, but how could that fair outside contain so rough and rude a soul? Yet this even she might have forgiven had the king shown any of the signs of love and admiration to which she had been so long accustomed. As for her mother, the poor Swan fairy was so bewildered at the extraordinary manners of her new son-in-law, that she was almost speechless.

Matters were in this state when King Lino's chamberlain begged for a private audience of her majesty, and no sooner were they alone than he told her that he feared that his master had suddenly gone mad, or had fallen under the spell of some magician.

'I had been lost in astonishment before,' said he, 'but now that he has failed to recognise the princess, and no longer possesses her portrait, which he never would part from for a single instant, my amazement knows no bounds. Perhaps, madam, your fairy gifts may be able to discover the reason of this change in one whose courtesy was the talk of the kingdom.' And with a low bow he took his departure.

The queen stood where the chamberlain left her, thinking deeply. Suddenly her face cleared, and going to an old chest which she kept in a secret room, she drew from it a small mirror. In this mirror she could see faithfully reflected whatever she wished, and at this moment she desired above all things to behold King Lino *as he really was.*

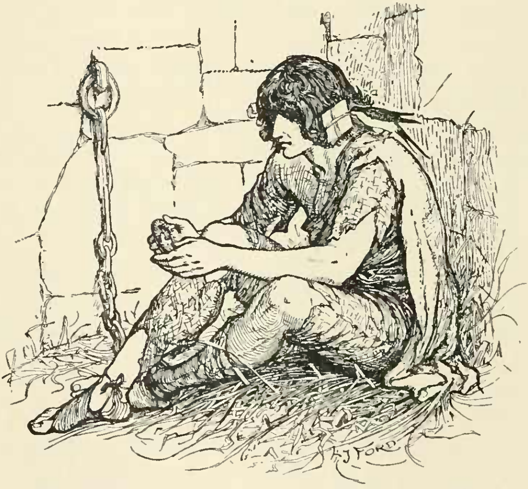
Ah! the chamberlain was right! It was not he who was lying on his bed snoring till the whole palace shook beneath him. No, *this* was her real son-in-law—the man dressed in dirty clothes, and imprisoned in one of Ismenor's strongest towers, and kissing the portrait of Hermosa, which had escaped the wizard's notice, owing to the young king having worn it, for better concealment, tied amongst his hair. Calling hastily to her daughter, she bade her also look, and Hermosa had the pleasure of gazing on Lino, who was behaving exactly as she could have wished. The mirror was still in her hand when the door of the prison opened, and there entered the hideous Riquette, who, from her upraised eyes, seemed to be begging from Lino some favour which he refused to grant. Of course Hermosa and her mother could not hear their words, but from Riquette's angry face as she left the room, it was not difficult to guess what had happened. But the mirror had more to tell, for it appeared that in fury at her rejection by the king, Riquette had ordered four strong men to scourge him till he fainted, which was done in the sight of Hermosa, who in horror dropped the mirror, and would have fallen, had she not been caught by her mother.

'Control yourself, my child,' said the fairy. 'We have need of all our wits if we are to rescue the king from the power of those wicked people. And first it is necessary to know who the man that has taken his name and his face really is.'

Then, picking up the mirror, she wished that she might behold the false lover; and the glass gave back a vision of a dirty, greasy groom, lying, dressed as he was, on her bed of state.

'So this is the trick Ismenor hoped to play us! Well, we will have our revenge, whatever it costs us to get it. Only we must be very careful not to let him guess that he has not deceived us, for his skill in magic is greater than mine, and I shall have to be very prudent. To begin with, I must leave you, and if the false king asks why, then answer that I have to settle some affairs on the borders of my kingdom. Meanwhile, be sure you treat him most politely, and arrange fêtes to amuse him. If he shows any sign of being suspicious, you can even give him to understand that, on your marriage, I intend to give up the crown to your husband. And now farewell!' So saying, the Swan fairy waved her hand, and a cloud came down and concealed her, and nobody imagined that the beautiful white cloud that was blown so rapidly across the sky was the chariot that was carrying the Swan fairy to the tower of Ismenor.

Now the tower was situated in the midst of a forest, so the queen thought that, under cover of the dark trees, it would be quite easy for her to drop to earth unseen. But the tower was so thoroughly enchanted that the more she tried to reach the ground the tighter something tried to hold her back. At length, by putting forth all the power she possessed, she managed to descend to the foot of the tower, and there, weak and faint as she was with her exertions, she lost no time in working her spells, and found that she could only overcome Ismenor by means of a stone from the ring of Gyges. But how was she to get this ring? for the magic book told her that Ismenor guarded it night and day among his most precious treasures. However, get it she must, and in the meantime the first step was to see the royal prisoner himself. So, drawing out her tablets, she wrote as follows:



THE SWALLOW BRINGS THE NOTE TO LINO

'The bird which brings you this letter is the Swan fairy, mother of Hermosa, who loves you as much as you love her!' And after this assurance, she related the wicked plot of which he had been the victim. Then, quickly changing herself into a swallow, she began to fly round the tower, till she discovered the window of Lino's prison. It was so high up that bars seemed needless, especially as four soldiers were stationed in the passage outside, therefore the fairy was able to enter, and even to hop on his shoulder, but he was so much occupied with gazing at the princess's portrait that it was some time before she could attract his attention. At last she gently scratched his cheek with the corner of the note, and he looked round with a start. On perceiving the swallow he knew at once that help had come, and tearing open the letter, he wept with joy on seeing the words it contained, and asked a thousand questions as to Hermosa, which the swallow was unable to answer, though, by repeated nods, she signed to him to read further. 'Must I indeed pretend to wish to marry that horrible Riquette?' he cried, when he had finished. 'Can I obtain the stone from the magician?'

Accordingly the next morning, when Riquette paid him her daily visit, he received her much more graciously than usual. The magician's daughter could not contain her delight at this change, and in answer to her expressions of joy, Lino told her that he had had a dream by which he had learned the inconstancy of Hermosa; also that a fairy had appeared and informed him that if he wished to break the bonds which bound him to the faithless princess and transfer his affections to the daughter of Ismenor, he must have in his possession for a day and a night a stone from the ring of Gyges, now in the possession of the magician. This news so enchanted Riquette, that she flung her arms round the king's neck and embraced him tenderly, greatly to his disgust, as he would infinitely have preferred the sticks of the soldiers. However, there was no help for it, and he did his best to seem pleased, till Riquette relieved him by announcing that she must lose no time in asking her father and obtaining from him the precious stone.

His daughter's request came as a great surprise to

Ismenor, whose suspicions were instantly excited; but, think as he would, he could not see any means by which the king, so closely guarded, might have held communication with the Swan fairy. Still, he would do nothing hastily, and, hiding his dismay, he told Riquette that his only wish was to make her happy, and that as she wished so much for the stone he would fetch it for her. Then he went into the closet where all his spells were worked, and in a short time he discovered that his enemy the Swan fairy was at that moment inside his palace.

'So that is it!' he said, smiling grimly. 'Well, she shall have a stone by all means, but a stone that will turn everyone who touches it into marble.' And placing a small ruby in a box, he returned to his daughter.

'Here is the talisman which will gain you the love of King Lino,' he said; 'but be sure you give him the box unopened, or else the stone will lose all its virtue.' With a cry of joy Riquette snatched the box from his hands, and ran off to the prison, followed by her father, who, holding tightly the enchanted handkerchief, was able, unseen, to watch the working of the spell. As he expected, at the foot of the tower stood the Swan fairy, who had had the imprudence to appear in her natural shape, waiting for the stone which the prince was to throw to her. Eagerly she caught the box as it fell from the prince's hands, but no sooner had her fingers touched the ruby, than a curious hardening came over her, her limbs stiffened, and her tongue could hardly utter the words 'We are betrayed.'

'Yes, you *are* betrayed,' cried Ismenor, in a terrible voice; 'and *you*,' he continued, dragging the king to the window, 'you shall turn into a parrot, and a parrot you will remain until you can persuade Hermosa to crush in your head.'

He had hardly finished before a blue parrot flew out into the forest; and the magician, mounting in his winged chariot, set off for the Isle of Swans, where he changed everybody into statues, exactly in the positions in which he found them, not even excepting Rabot himself. Only Hermosa was spared, and her he ordered to get into his chariot beside him. In a few minutes he reached the Forest of Wonders, when the magician got down, and dragged the unhappy princess out after him.

'I have changed your mother into a stone, and your lover into a parrot,' said he, 'and you are to become a tree, and a tree you will remain until you have crushed the head of the person you love best in the world. But I will leave you your mind and memory, that your tortures may be increased a thousand-fold.'

Great magician as he was, Ismenor could not have invented a more terrible fate had he tried for a hundred years. The hours passed wearily by for the poor princess, who longed for a wood-cutter's axe to put an end to her misery. How were they to be delivered from their doom? And even supposing that King Lino *did* fly that way, there were thousands of blue parrots in the forest, and how was she to know him, or he her? As to her mother—ah! that was too bad to think about! So, being a woman, she kept on thinking.

Meanwhile the blue parrot flew about the world, making friends wherever he went, till, one day, he entered the castle of an old wizard who had just married a beautiful young wife. Grenadine, for such was her name, led a very dull life, and was delighted to have a playfellow, so she gave him a golden cage to sleep in, and delicious fruits to eat. Only in one way did he disappoint her—he never would talk as other parrots did.

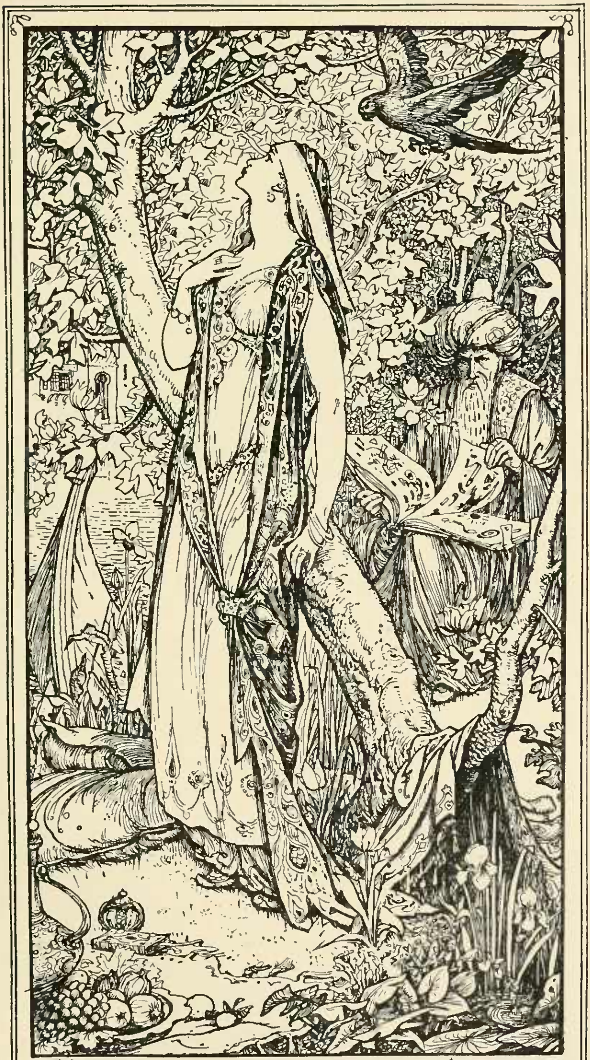
'If you only knew how happy it would make me, I'm sure you would try,' she was fond of saying; but the parrot did not seem to hear her.

One morning, however, she left the room to gather some flowers, and the parrot, finding himself alone, hopped to the table, and, picking up a pencil, wrote some verses on a piece of paper. He had just finished when he was startled by a noise, and letting fall the pencil, he flew out of the window.

Now hardly had he dropped the pencil when the wizard lifted a corner of the curtain which hung over the doorway, and advanced into the room. Seeing a paper on the table, he picked it up, and great was his surprise as he read:

'Fair princess, to win your grace,
I will hold discourse with you;
Silence, though, were more in place
Than chatt'ring like a cockatoo.'

'I half suspected it was enchanted,' murmured the wizard to himself. And he fetched his books and searched them, and found that instead of being a parrot, the bird was really a king who had fallen under the wrath of a magician, and that magician the man whom the wizard hated most in the world. Eagerly he read on, seeking for some means of breaking the enchantment, and at last, to his great joy, he discovered the remedy. Then he hurried to his wife, who was lying on some cushions under the tree on which the parrot had perched, and informed her that her favourite was really the king of a great country, and that, if she would whistle for the bird, they would all go together to a certain spot in the Forest of Marvels, 'where I will restore him to his own shape. Only you must not be afraid or cry out, whatever I do,' added he, 'or everything will be spoilt.' The wizard's wife jumped up in an instant, so delighted was she, and began to whistle the song that the parrot loved; but as he did not wish it to be known that he had been listening to the conversation he waited until she had turned her back, when he flew down from the tree and alighted on her shoulder. Then they got into a golden boat, which carried them to a clearing in the forest, where three tall trees stood by themselves.



The Magician's Wife Whistles to the Parrot

'I want these trees for my magic fire,' he said to his wife; 'put the parrot on that branch, he will be quite safe, and go yourself to a little distance. If you stay too near you may get your head crushed in their fall.'

At these words the parrot suddenly remembered the prophecy of Ismenor, and held himself ready, his heart beating at the thought that in one of those trees he beheld Hermosa. Meanwhile the magician took a spade, and loosened the earth of the roots of the three trees so that they might all fall together. Directly the parrot observed them totter he spread his wings and flew right under the middle one, which was the most beautiful of the three. There was a crash, then Lino and Hermosa stood facing each other, clasped hand in hand.

After the first few moments, the princess's thoughts turned to her mother, and falling at the feet of the magician, who was smiling with delight at the success of his plan, she implored him to help them once more, and to give the Swan fairy back her proper shape.

'That is not so easy,' said he, 'but I will try what I can do.' And transporting himself to his palace to obtain a little bottle of poisoned water, he waited till nightfall, and started at once for Ismenor's tower. Of course, had Ismenor consulted his books he would have seen what his enemy was doing, he might have protected himself; but he had been eating and drinking too much, and had gone to bed, sleeping heavily. Changing himself into a bat, the magician flew into the room, and hiding himself in the curtains, he poured all the liquid over Ismenor's face, so that he died without a groan. At the same instant the Swan fairy became a woman again, for no magician, however powerful, can work spells which last beyond his own life.

So when the Swan fairy returned to her capital she found all her courtiers waiting at the gate to receive her, and in their midst, beaming with happiness, Hermosa and King Lino. Standing behind them, though a long way off, was Rabot; but his dirty clothes had given place to clean ones, when his earnest desire was granted, and the princess had made him head of her stables.

And here we must bid them all farewell, feeling sure they will have many years of happiness before them after the terrible trials through which they have passed.

[Adapted and shortened from *Le Cabinet des Fées*.]

GEIRLAUG THE KING'S DAUGHTER

One day a powerful king and his beautiful wife were sitting in the gardens of their capital city, talking earnestly about the future life of their little son, who was sleeping by their side in his beautiful golden cradle. They had been married for many years without children, so when this baby came they thought themselves the happiest couple in the whole world. He was a fine sturdy little boy, who loved to kick and to strike out with his fists; but even if he had been weak and small they would still have thought him the most wonderful creature upon earth, and so absorbed were they in making plans for him, that they never noticed a huge dark shadow creeping up, till a horrible head with gleaming teeth stretched over them, and in an instant their beloved baby was snatched away.

For a while the king and queen remained where they were, speechless with horror. Then the king rose slowly, and holding out his hand to his wife, led her weeping into the palace, and for many days their subjects saw no more of them.

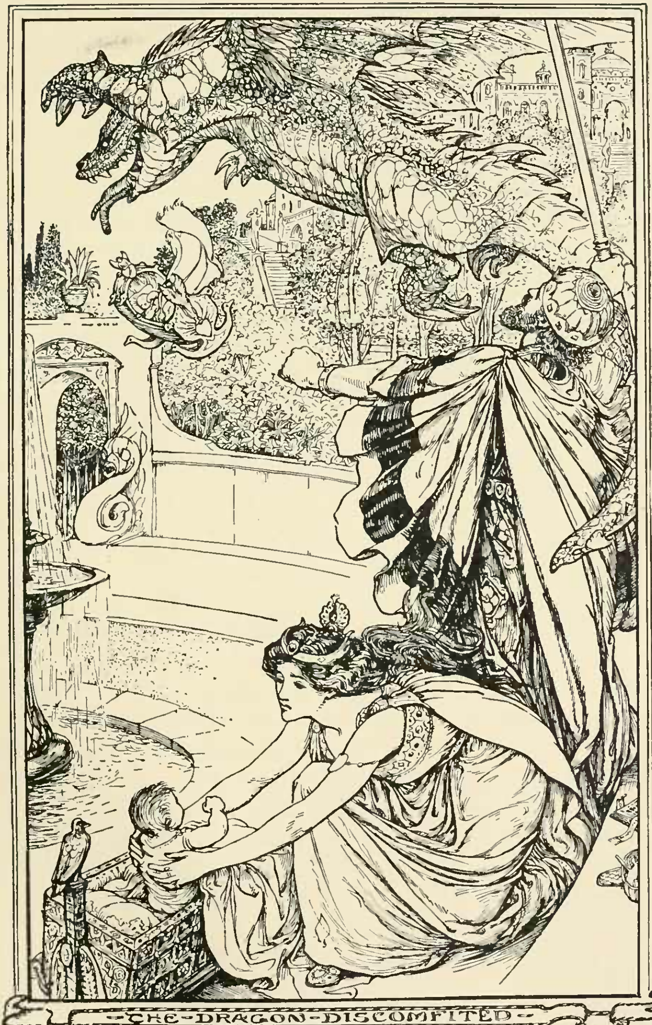
Meanwhile the dragon soared high into the air, holding the cradle between his teeth, and the baby still slept on. He flew so fast that he soon crossed the borders of another kingdom, and again he beheld the king and queen of the country seated in the garden with a little girl lying in a wonderful cradle of white satin and lace. Swooping down from behind as he had done before, he was just about to seize the cradle, when the king jumped up and dealt him such a blow with his golden staff that the dragon not only started back, but in his pain let fall the boy, as he spread his wings and soared into the air away from all danger.

'That was a narrow escape,' said the king, turning to his wife, who sat pale with fright, and clasping her baby tightly in her arms. 'Frightful,' murmured the queen; 'but look, what is that glittering object that is lying out there?' The king walked in the direction of her finger, and to his astonishment beheld another cradle and another baby.

'Ah! the monster must have stolen this as he sought to steal Geirlaug,' cried he. And stooping lower, he read some words that were written on the fine linen that was wound round the boy. 'This is Grethari, son of Grethari the king!' Unfortunately it happened that the two neighbouring monarchs had had a serious quarrel, and for some years had ceased holding communication with each other. So, instead of sending a messenger at once to Grethari to tell him of the safety of his son, the king contented himself with adopting the baby, which was brought up with Geirlaug the princess.

For a while things went well with the children, who were as happy as the day was long, but at last there came a time when the queen could no more run races or play at hide-and-seek with them in the garden as she was so fond of doing, but lay and watched them from a pile of soft cushions. By-and-by she gave up doing even that, and people in the palace spoke with low voices, and even Geirlaug and Grethari. trod gently and moved quietly when they drew near her room. At length, one morning, they were sent for by the king himself, who, his eyes red with weeping, told them that the queen was dead.

Great was the sorrow of the two children, for they had loved the queen very dearly, and life seemed dull without her. But the lady-in-waiting who took care of them in the tower which had been built for them while they were



THE DRAGON DISCOMFITED

still babies, was kind and good, and when the king was busy or away in other parts of his kingdom she made them quite happy, and saw that they were taught everything that a prince and princess ought to know. Thus two or three years passed, when, one day, as the children were anxiously awaiting their father's return from a distant city, there rode post haste into the courtyard of the palace a herald whom the king had sent before him, to say that he was bringing back a new wife.

Now, in itself, there was nothing very strange or dreadful in the fact that the king should marry again, but, as the old lady-in-waiting soon guessed, the queen, in spite of her beauty, was a witch, and as it was easy to see that she was jealous of everyone who might gain power over her husband, it boded ill for Geirlaug and Grethari. The faithful woman could not sleep for thinking about her charges, and her soul sank when, a few months after the marriage, war broke out with a country across the seas, and the king rode away at the head of his troops. Then there happened what she had so long expected. One night, when, unlike her usual habit, she was sleeping soundly—afterwards she felt sure that a drug had been put into her food—the witch came to the tower. Exactly what she did there no one knew, but, when the sun rose, the beds of Grethari and Geirlaug were empty. At dawn the queen summoned some of her guards, and told them that she had been warned in a dream that some evil fate would befall her through a wild beast, and bade them go out and kill every animal within two miles of the palace. But the only beasts they found were two black foals of wondrous beauty, fitted for the king's riding; it seemed a pity to kill them, for what harm could two little foals do anyone? So they let them run away, frisking over the plain, and returned to the palace.

'Did you see *nothing*, really *nothing*?' asked the queen, when they again appeared before her.

'Nothing, your majesty,' they replied. But the queen did not believe them, and when they were gone, she gave orders to her steward that at supper the guards should be well plied with strong drink so that their tongues should be loosened, and, further, that he was to give heed to their babble, and report to her whatever they might let fall.

'Your majesty's commands have been obeyed,' said the steward when, late in the evening, he begged admittance to the royal apartments; 'but, after all, the men have told you the truth. I listened to their talk from beginning to end, and nothing did they see save two black foals.' He might have added more, but the look in the queen's blazing eyes terrified him, and, bowing hastily, he backed quickly out of her presence.

In a week's time the king came home, and right glad were all the courtiers to see him.

'Now, perhaps, she will find someone else to scream at,' whispered they amongst themselves. 'She' was the queen, who had vented her rage on her attendants during these days, though what had happened to make her so angry nobody knew. But whatever might be the meaning of it, things would be sure to improve with the king to rule in the palace instead of his wife. Unfortunately, their joy only lasted a short while; for the very first night after the king's arrival the queen related the evil dream she had dreamt in his absence, and begged him to go out the next morning and kill every living creature he saw within two miles of the city. The king, who always believed everything the queen said, promised to do as she wished. But before he had ridden through the lovely gardens that surrounded the palace, he was attracted by the singing of two little blue birds perched on a scarlet-berried holly, which made him think of everything beautiful that he had ever heard of or imagined. Hour after hour passed by, and still the birds sang, and still the king listened, though of course he never guessed that it was Geirlaug and Grethari whose notes filled him with enchantment. At length darkness fell; the birds' voices were hushed, and the king awoke with a start to find that for that day his promise to the queen could not be kept.

'Well! did you see anything?' she asked eagerly, when the king entered her apartments.

'Ah, my dear, I am almost ashamed to confess to you. But the fact is that before I rode as far as the western gate the singing of two strange little blue birds made me forget all else in the world. And you will hardly believe it—but not until it grew dark did I remember where I was and what I should have been doing. However, to-morrow nothing shall hinder me from fulfilling your desires.'

'There will be no to-morrow,' muttered the queen, as she turned away with a curious glitter in her eyes. But the king did not hear her.

That night the king gave a great supper in the palace in honour of the victory he had gained over the enemy. The three men whom the queen had sent forth to slay the wild beasts held positions of trust in the household, for to them was committed the custody of the queen's person. And on the occasion of a feast their places were always next that of the king, so it was easy for the queen to scatter a slow but fatal poison in their cups without anyone being the wiser. Before dawn the palace was roused by the news that the king was dead, and that the three officers of the guards were dying also. Of course nobody's cries and laments were as loud as those of the queen. But when once the splendid funeral was over, she gave out that she was going to shut herself up in a distant castle till the year of her mourning was over, and after appointing a regent of the kingdom, she set out attended only by a maid who knew all her secrets. Once she had left the palace she quickly began to work her spells, to discover under what form Geirlaug and Grethari lay hidden. Happily, the princess had studied magic under a former governess, so was able to fathom her stepmother's wicked plot, and hastily changed herself into a whale, and her foster-brother into its fin. Then the queen took the shape of a shark and gave chase.

For several hours a fierce battle raged between the whale and the shark, and the sea around was red with blood; first one of the combatants got the better, and then the other, but at length it became plain to the crowd of little fishes gathered round to watch, that the victory would be to the whale. And so it was. But when, after a mighty struggle, the shark floated dead and harmless on the surface of the water, the whale was so exhausted that she had only strength enough to drag her wounded body into a quiet little bay, and for three days she remained there as still and motionless as if she had been dead herself. At the end of the three days her wounds were healed, and she began to think what it was best to do.

'Let us go back to your father's kingdom,' she said to Grethari, when they had both resumed their proper shapes, and were sitting on a high cliff above the sea.

'How clever you are! I never should have thought of that!' answered Grethari, who, in truth, was not clever at all. But Geirlaug took a small box of white powder from her dress, and sprinkled some over him and some over herself, and, quicker than lightning, they found themselves in the palace grounds from which Grethari had been carried off by the dragon so many years before.

'Now take up the band with the golden letters and bind it about your forehead,' said Geirlaug, 'and go boldly up to the castle. And, remember, however great may be your thirst, you must drink nothing till you have first spoken to your father. If you do, ill will befall us both.'

'*Why* should I be thirsty?' replied Grethari, staring at her in astonishment. 'It will not take me five minutes to reach the castle gate.' Geirlaug held her peace, but her eyes had in them a sad look. 'Good-bye,' she said at last, and she turned and kissed him.

Grethari had spoken truly when he declared that he could easily get to the castle in five minutes. At least, no one would have dreamed that it could possibly take any longer. Yet, to his surprise, the door which stood so widely open that he could see the colour of the hangings within never appeared to grow any nearer, while each moment the sun burned more hotly, and his tongue was parched with thirst.

'I don't understand! What *can* be the matter with me—and why haven't I reached the castle long ago?' he murmured to himself, as his knees began to knock under him with fatigue, and his head to swim. For a few more paces he staggered on blindly, when, suddenly, the sound of rushing water smote upon his ears; and in a little wood that bordered the path he beheld a stream falling over a rock. At this sight his promise to Geirlaug was forgotten. Fighting his way through the brambles that tore his clothes, he cast himself down beside the fountain, and seizing the golden cup that hung from a tree, he drank a deep draught.

When he rose up the remembrance of Geirlaug and of his past life had vanished, and, instead, something stirred dimly within him at the vision of the white-haired man and woman who stood in the open door with outstretched hands.

'Grethari! Grethari! So you have come home at last,' cried they.

For three hours Geirlaug waited in the spot where Grethari had left her, and then she began to understand what had happened. Her heart was heavy, but she soon made up her mind what to do, and pushing her way out of the wood, she skirted the high wall that enclosed the royal park and gardens, till she reached a small house where the forester lived with his two daughters.

'Do you want a girl to sweep, and to milk the cows?' asked she, when one of the sisters answered her knock.

'Yes, we do, very badly; and as you look strong and clean, we will take you for a servant if you like to come,' replied the young woman.

'But, first, what is your name?'

'Laupherthа,' said Geirlaug quickly, for she did not wish anyone to know who she was; and following her new mistress into the house, she begged to be taught her work without delay. And so clever was she, that, by-and-by, it began to be noised abroad that the strange girl who had come to live in the forester's house had not her equal in the whole kingdom for skill as well as beauty. Thus years slipped away, during which Geirlaug grew to be a woman. Now and then she caught glimpses of Grethari as he rode out to hunt in the forest, but when she saw him coming she hid herself behind the great trees, for her heart was still sore at his forgetfulness. One day, however, when she was gathering herbs, he came upon her suddenly, before she had time to escape, though as she had stained her face and hands brown, and covered her beautiful hair with a scarlet cap, he did not guess her to be his foster-sister.

'What is your name, pretty maiden?' asked he.

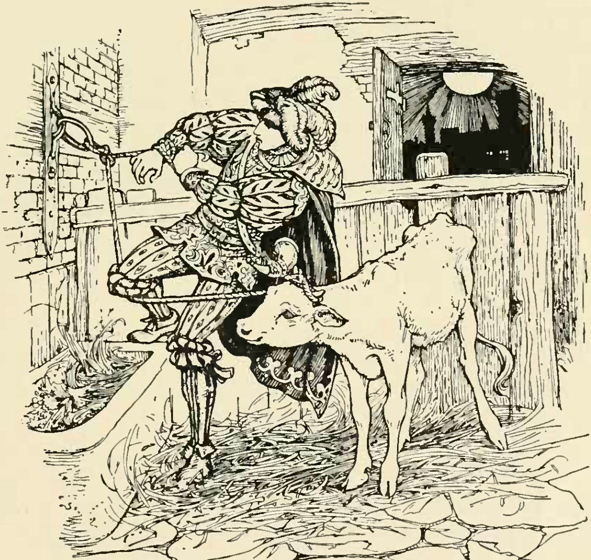
'Laupherthа,' answered the girl, with a low curtsy.

'Ah! it is you, then, of whom I have heard so much,' said he; 'you are too beautiful to spend your life serving the forester's daughters. Come with me to the palace, and my mother the queen will make you one of her ladies in waiting.'

'Truly, that would be a great fortune,' replied the maiden. 'And, if you really mean it, I will go with you. But how shall I know that you are not jesting?'

'Give me something to do for you, and I will do it, whatever it is,' cried the young man eagerly. And she cast down her eyes, and answered:

'Go to the stable, and bind the calf that is there so that it shall not break loose in the night and wander away, for the forester and his daughters have treated me well, and I would not leave them with aught of my work still undone.'



PULL AS HE MIGHT
HE COULD NOT GET FREE

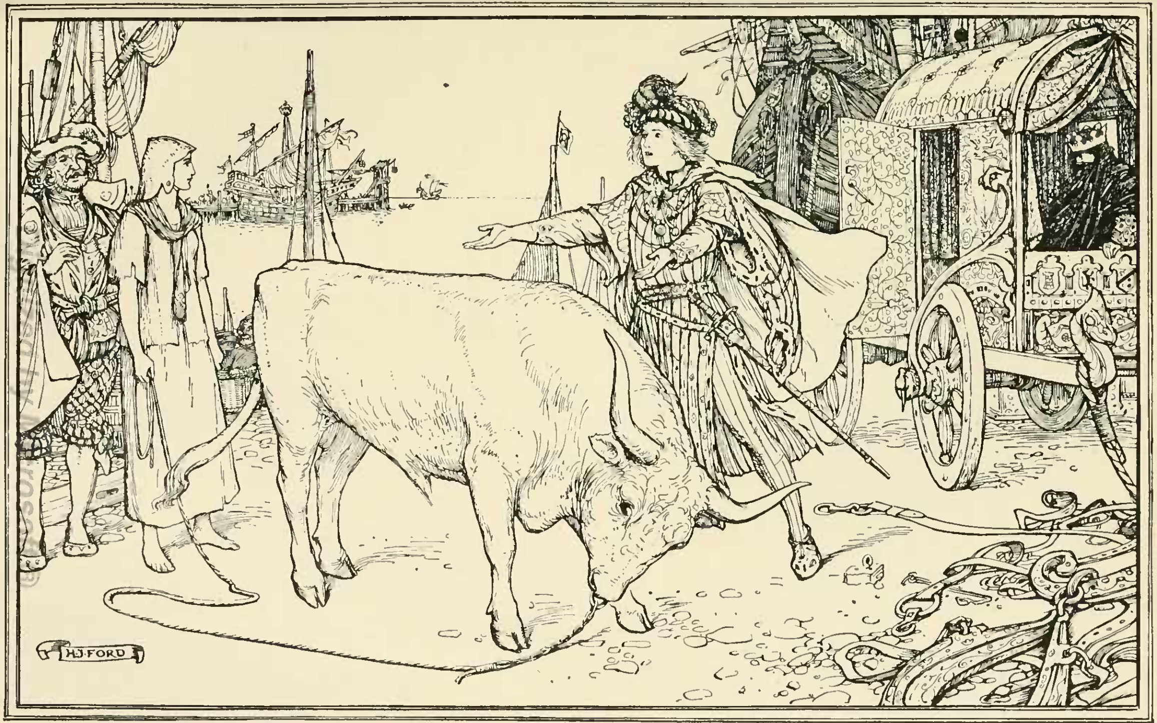
So Grethari set out for the stable where the calf stood, and wound the rope about its horns. But when he had made it fast to the wall, he found that a coil of the rope had twisted itself round his wrist, and, pull as he might, he could not get free. All night he wriggled and struggled till he was half dead with fatigue. But when the sun rose the rope suddenly fell away from him, and, very angry with the maiden, he dragged himself back to the palace. 'She is a witch,' he muttered crossly to himself, 'and I will have no more to do with her.' And he flung himself on his bed and slept all day.

Not long after this adventure the king and queen sent their beloved son on an embassy to a neighbouring country to seek a bride from amongst the seven princesses. The most beautiful of all was, of course, the one chosen, and the young pair took ship without delay for the kingdom of the prince's parents. The wind was fair and the vessel so swift, that in less time than could have been expected the harbour nearest the castle was reached. A splendid carriage had been left in readiness close to the beach, but no horses were to be found, for every one had been carried off to take part in a great review which the king was to hold that day in honour of his son's marriage.

'I can't stay here all day,' said the princess, crossly, when Grethari told her of the plight they were in. 'I am perfectly worn out as it is, and you will have to find something to draw the carriage, if it is only a donkey. If you don't, I will sail back straight to my father.'

Poor Grethari was much troubled by the words of the princess. Not that he felt so very much in love with her, for during the voyage she had shown him several times how vain and bad tempered she was; but as a prince and a bridegroom, he could not, of course, bear to think that any slight had been put upon her. So he hastily bade his attendants to go in search of some animal, and bring it at once to the place at which they were waiting.

During the long pause the princess sat in the beautiful golden coach, her blue velvet mantle powdered with silver bees drawn closely round her, so that not even the tip of her nose could be seen. At length a girl appeared



'WILL YOU LEND ME YOUR OX, FAIR MAIDEN?'

driving a young ox in front of her, followed by one of the prince's messengers, who was talking eagerly.

'Will you lend me your ox, fair maiden?' asked Grethari, jumping up and going to meet them. 'You shall fix your own price, and it shall be paid ungrudgingly, for never before was king's son in such a plight.'

'My price is seats for me and my two friends behind you and your bride at the wedding feast,' answered she. And to this Grethari joyfully consented.

Six horses would not have drawn the coach at the speed of this one ox. Trees and fields flew by so fast that the bride became quite giddy, and expected, besides, that they would be upset every moment. But, in spite of her fears, nothing happened, and they drew up in safety at the door of the palace, to the great surprise of the king and queen. The marriage preparations were hurried on, and by the end of the week everything was ready. It was, perhaps, fortunate that the princess was too busy with her clothes and her jewels during this period to pay much heed to Grethari, so that by the time the wedding day came round he had almost forgotten how cross and rude she had been on the journey.

The oldest men and women in the town agreed that nothing so splendid had ever been seen as the bridal procession to the great hall, where the banquet was to be held, before the ceremony was celebrated in the palace. The princess was in high good humour, feeling that all eyes were upon her, and bowed and smiled right and left. Taking the prince's hand, she sailed proudly down the room, where the guests were already assembled, to her place at the head of the table by the side of the bridegroom. As she did so, three strange ladies in shining dresses of blue, green, and red, glided in and seated themselves on a vacant bench immediately behind the young couple. The red lady was Geirlaug, who had brought with her the forester's daughters, and in one hand she held a wand of birch bark, and in the other a closed basket.

Silently they sat as the feast proceeded; hardly anyone noticed their presence, or, if they did, supposed them to be attendants of their future queen. Suddenly, when the merriment was at its height, Geirlaug opened the basket, and out flew a cock and hen. To the astonishment of everyone, the birds circled about in front of the royal pair, the cock plucking the feathers out of the tail of the hen, who tried in vain to escape from him.

'Will you treat me as badly as Grethari treated Geirlaug?' cried the hen at last. And Grethari heard, and started up wildly. In an instant all the past rushed back to him; the princess by his side was forgotten, and he only saw the face of the child with whom he had played long years ago.

'Where is Geirlaug?' he exclaimed, looking round the hall; and his eyes fell upon the strange lady. With a smile she held out a ring which he had given her on her twelfth birthday, when they were still children, without a thought of the future. 'You and none other shall be my wife,' he said, taking her hand, and leading her into the middle of the company.

It is not easy to describe the scene that followed. Of course, nobody understood what had occurred, and the king and queen imagined that their son had suddenly gone mad. As for the princess her rage and fury were beyond belief. The guests left the hall as quickly as they could, so that the royal family might arrange their own affairs, and in the end it was settled that half the kingdom must be given to the despised princess, instead of a husband. She sailed back at once to her country, where she was soon betrothed to a young noble, whom, in reality, she liked much better than Grethari. That evening Grethari was married to Geirlaug, and they lived happily till they died, and made all their people happy also.

[From *Neuisländischen Volksmärchen.*]

THE STORY OF LITTLE KING LOC

Two or three miles from the coast of France, anyone sailing in a ship on a calm day can see, deep, deep down, the trunks of great trees standing up in the water. Many hundreds of years ago these trees formed part of a large forest, full of all sorts of wild animals, and beyond the forest was a fine city, guarded by a castle in which dwelt the Dukes of Clarides. But little by little the sea drew nearer to the town; the foundations of the houses became undermined and fell in, and at length a shining sea flowed over the land. However, all this happened a long time after the story I am going to tell you.

The Dukes of Clarides had always lived in the midst of their people, and protected them both in war and peace.

At the period when this tale begins the Duke Robert was dead, leaving a young and beautiful duchess who ruled in his stead. Of course everyone expected her to marry again, but she refused all suitors who sought her hand, saying that having only one soul she could have only one husband, and that her baby daughter was quite enough for her.

One day she was sitting in the tower, which looked out over a rocky heath, covered in summer with purple and yellow flowers, when she beheld a troop of horsemen riding towards the castle. In the midst, seated on a white horse with black and silver trappings, was a lady whom the duchess at once knew to be her friend the

Countess of Blanchelande, a young widow like herself, mother of a little boy two years older than Abeille des Clarides. The duchess hailed her arrival with delight, but her joy was soon turned into weeping when the countess sank down beside her on a pile of cushions, and told the reason of her visit.

'As you know,' she said, taking her friend's hand and pressing it between her own, 'whenever a Countess of Blanchelande is about to die she finds a white rose lying on her pillow. Last night I went to bed feeling unusually happy, but this morning when I woke the rose was resting against my cheek. I have no one to help me in the world but you, and I have come to ask if you will take Youri my son, and let him be a brother to Abeille?'

Tears choked the voice of the duchess, but she flung herself on the countess's neck, and pressed her close. Silently the two women took leave of each other, and silently the doomed lady mounted her horse and rode home again. Then, giving her sleeping boy into the care of Francœur, her steward, she laid herself quietly on her bed, where, the next morning, they found her dead and peaceful.

So Youri and Abeille grew up side by side, and the duchess faithfully kept her promise, and was a mother to them both. As they got bigger she often took them with her on her journeys through her duchy, and taught them to know her people, and to pity and to aid them.

It was on one of these journeys that, after passing through meadows covered with flowers, Youri caught sight of a great glittering expanse lying beneath some distant mountains.

'What is that, godmother?' he asked, waving his hand. 'The shield of a giant, I suppose.'

'No; a silver plate as big as the moon!' said Abeille, twisting herself round on her pony.

'It is neither a silver plate nor a giant's shield,' replied the duchess; 'but a beautiful lake. Still, in spite of its beauty, it is dangerous to go near it, for in its depths dwell some Undines, or water spirits, who lure all passers-by to their deaths.'

Nothing more was said about the lake, but the children did not forget it, and one morning, after they had returned to the castle, Abeille came up to Youri.

'The tower door is open,' whispered she; 'let us go up. Perhaps we shall find some fairies.'

But they did not find any fairies; only, when they reached the roof, the lake looked bluer and more enchanting than ever. Abeille gazed at it for a moment, and then she said:

'Do you see? I mean to go there!'

'But you mustn't,' cried Youri. 'You heard what your mother said. And, besides, it is so far; how could we get there?'

'*You* ought to know that,' answered Abeille scornfully. 'What is the good of being a man, and learning all sorts of things, if you have to ask me. However, there are plenty of other men in the world, and I shall get one of them to tell me.'

Youri coloured; Abeille had never spoken like this before, and, instead of being two years younger than himself, she suddenly seemed many years older. She stood with her mocking eyes fixed on him, till he grew angry at being outdone by a girl, and taking her hand he said boldly:

'Very well, we will *both* go to the lake.'

The next afternoon, when the duchess was working at her tapestry surrounded by her maidens, the children went out, as usual, to play in the garden. The moment they found themselves alone, Youri turned to Abeille, and holding out his hand, said:

'Come.'

'Come where?' asked Abeille, opening her eyes very wide.

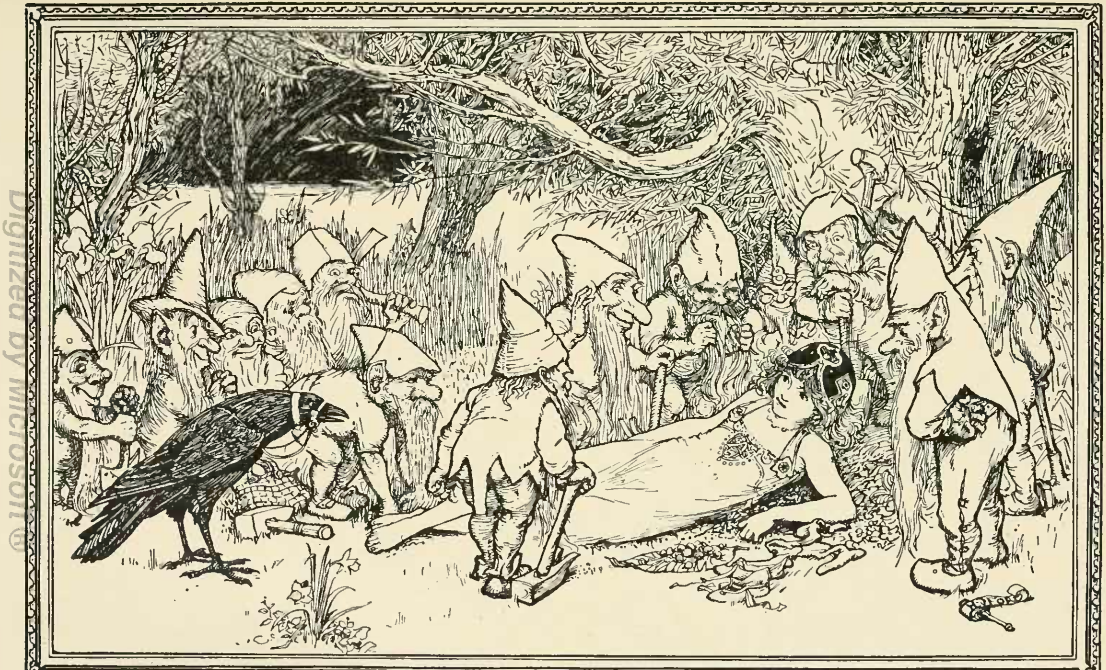
'To the lake, of course,' answered the boy.

Abeille was silent. It was one thing to pretend you meant to be disobedient some day, a long time off, and quite another to start for such a distant place without anyone knowing that you had left the garden. 'And in satin shoes, too! How stupid boys were, to be sure!'

'Stupid or not, I am going to the lake, and you are going with me!' said Youri, who had not forgotten or forgiven the look she had cast on him the day before. 'Unless,' added he, 'you are afraid, and in that case I shall go alone.'

This was too much for Abeille. Bursting into tears, she flung herself on Youri's neck, and declared that wherever he went she would go too. So, peace having been made between them, they set out.

It was a hot day, and the townspeople were indoors waiting till the sun was low in the sky before they set out either to work or play, so the children passed through the streets unperceived, and crossed the river by the bridge into the flowery meadows along the road by which they had ridden with the duchess. By-and-by Abeille began to feel thirsty, but the sun had drunk up all the water, and not a drop was left for her. They walked on a little further, and by good luck found a cherry-tree covered with ripe fruit, and after a rest and a refreshing meal, they were sure that they were strong enough to reach the lake in a few minutes. But soon Abeille began to limp and to say that her foot hurt her, and Youri had to untie the ribbons that fastened her shoe and see what was the matter. A stone had got in, so this was easily set right, and for a while they skipped along the path singing and chattering, till Abeille stopped again. This time her shoe had come off, and turning to pick it up she caught sight of the towers of the castle,



ABEILLE FINDS HERSELF AMONG THE LITTLE MEN

looking such a long way off that her heart sank, and she burst into tears.

'It is getting dark, and the wolves will eat us,' sobbed she. But Youri put his arms round her and comforted her.

'Why, we are close to the lake now. There is nothing to be afraid of! We shall be home again to supper,' cried he. And Abeille dried her eyes, and trotted on beside him.

Yes, the lake was there, blue and silvery with purple and gold irises growing on its banks, and white water-lilies floated on its bosom. Not a trace was there of a man, or of one of the great beasts so much feared by Abeille, but only the marks of tiny forked feet on the sand. The little girl at once pulled off her torn shoes and stockings and let the water flow over her, while Youri looked about for some nuts or strawberries. But none were to be found.

'I noticed, a little way back, a clump of blackberry bushes,' said he. 'Wait here for me, and I will go and gather some fruit, and after that we will start home again.' And Abeille, leaning her head drowsily against a cushion of soft moss, murmured something in reply, and soon fell asleep. In her dream a crow, bearing the smallest man that ever was seen, appeared hovering for a moment above her, and then vanished. At the same instant Youri returned and placed by her side a large leaf-full of strawberries.

'It is a pity to wake her just yet,' thought he, and wandered off beyond a clump of silvery willows to a spot from which he could get a view of the whole lake. In the moonlight, the light mist that hung over the surface made it look like fairyland. Then gradually the silver veil seemed to break up, and the shapes of fair women with outstretched hands and long green locks floated towards him. Seized with a sudden fright, the boy turned to fly. But it was too late.

Unconscious of the terrible doom that had befallen her foster-brother, Abeille slept on, and did not awake even when a crowd of little men with white beards down to their knees came and stood in a circle round her.

'What shall we do with her?' asked Pic, who seemed older than any of them, though they were all very old.

'Build a cage and put her into it,' answered Rug.

'No! No! What should such a beautiful princess do in a cage?' cried Dig. And Tad, who was the kindest of them all, proposed to carry her home to her parents. But the other gnomes were too pleased with their new toy to listen to this for a moment.

'Look, she is waking,' whispered Pau. And as he spoke Abeille slowly opened her eyes. At first she imagined she was still dreaming; but as the little men did not move, it suddenly dawned upon her that they were real, and starting to her feet, she called loudly:

'Youri! Youri! Where are you?'

At the sound of her voice the gnomes only pressed more closely round her, and, trembling with fear, she hid her face in her hands. The gnomes were at first much puzzled to know what to do; then Tad, climbing on a branch of the willow tree that hung over her, stooped down, and gently stroked her fingers. The child understood that he meant to be kind, and letting her hands fall, gazed at her captors. After an instant's pause she said:

'Little men, it is a great pity that you are so ugly. But, all the same, I will love you if you will only give me something to eat, as I am dying of hunger.'

A rustle was heard among the group as she spoke. Some were very angry at being called ugly, and said she deserved no better fate than to be left where she was. Others laughed, and declared that it did not matter what a mere mortal thought about them; while Tad bade Bog, their messenger, fetch her some milk and honey and the finest white bread that was made in their ovens under the earth. In less time than Abeille would have taken to tie her shoe he was back again, mounted on his crow. And by the time she had eaten the bread and honey and drunk the milk, Abeille was not frightened any more, and felt quite ready to talk.

'Little men,' she said, looking up with a smile, 'your supper was very good, and I thank you for it. My name is Abeille, and my brother is called Youri. Help me to find him, and tell me which is the path that leads to the castle, for mother must think something dreadful has happened to us!'

'But your feet are so sore that you cannot walk,' answered Dig. 'And we may not cross the bounds into your country. The best we can do is to make a litter of twigs and cover it with moss, and we will bear you into the mountains, and present you to our king.'

Now, many a little girl would have been terrified at the thought of being carried off alone, she did not know where. But Abeille, when she had recovered from her first fright, was pleased at the notion of her strange adventure.

'How much she would have to tell her mother and Youri on her return home! Probably *they* would never go inside a mountain, if they lived to be a hundred.' So she curled herself comfortably on her nest of moss, and waited to see what would happen.

Up, and up, and up they went; and by-and-by Abeille fell asleep again, and did not wake till the sun was shining. Up, and up, and up, for the little men could only walk very slowly, though they could spring over rocks quicker than any mortal. Suddenly the light that streamed through the branches of the litter began to change. It seemed hardly less bright, but it was certainly different; then the litter was put down, and the gnomes crowded round and helped Abeille to step out of it.

Before her stood a little man not half her size, but splendidly dressed and full of dignity. On his head was a crown of such huge diamonds that you wondered how his small body could support it. A royal mantle fell from his shoulders, and in his hand he held a lance.

'King Loc,' said one of the forest gnomes, 'we found this beautiful child asleep by the lake, and have brought her to you. She says that her name is Abeille, and her mother is the Duchesse des Clarides.'

'You have done well,' answered the king; 'she shall be one of us.' And standing on tiptoe, so that he could kiss her hand, he told her that they would all take care of her and make her happy, and that anything she wished for she should have at once.

'I want a pair of shoes,' replied Abeille.

'Shoes!' commanded the king, striking the ground with his lance; and immediately a lovely pair of silver shoes embroidered with pearls were slipped on her feet by one of the gnomes.

'They are beautiful shoes,' said Abeille rather doubtfully; 'but do you think they will carry me all the way back to my mother?'

'No, they are not meant for rough roads,' replied the king, 'but for walking about the smooth paths of the mountain, for we have many wonders to show you.'

'Little King Loc,' answered Abeille, 'take away these beautiful slippers and give me a pair of wooden shoes instead, and let me go back to my mother.' But King Loc only shook his head.

'Little King Loc,' said Abeille again—and this time her voice trembled—'let me go back to my mother and Youri, and I will love you with all my heart, nearly as well as I love them.'

'Who is Youri?' asked King Loc.

'Why—Youri—who has lived with us since I was a baby,' replied Abeille; surprised that he did not know what everyone else was aware of, and never guessing that by mentioning the boy she was sealing her own fate. For King Loc had already thought what a good wife she would make in a few years' time, and he did not want Youri to come between them. So he was silent, and Abeille, seeing he was not pleased, burst into tears.

'Little King Loc,' she cried, taking hold of a corner of his mantle, 'think how unhappy my mother will be. She will fancy that wild beasts have eaten me, or that I have got drowned in the lake.'

'Be comforted,' replied King Loc; 'I will send her a dream, so that she shall know that you are safe.'

At this Abeille's sad face brightened. 'Little King Loc,' she said, smiling, 'how clever you are! But you must send her a dream every night, so that she shall see *me*—and *me* a dream, so that I may see her.'

And this King Loc promised to do.

When Abeille grew accustomed to do without her mother and Youri, she made herself happy enough in her new home. Everyone was kind to her, and petted her, and then there were such quantities of new things for her to see. The gnomes were always busy, and knew how to fashion beautiful toys as well or better than the people who lived on the earth; and now and then, wandering with Tad or Dig in the underground passages, Abeille would catch a glimpse of blue sky through a rent in the rocks, and this she loved best of all. In this manner six years passed away.

'His Highness King Loc wishes to see you in his presence chamber,' said Tad, one morning, to Abeille, who was singing to herself on a golden lute; and Abeille, wondering why the king had grown so formal all of a sudden, got up obediently. Directly she appeared, King Loc opened a door in the wall which led into his treasure chamber. Abeille had never been there before, and was amazed at the splendid things heaped up before her. Gold, jewels, brocades, carpets, lay round the walls, and she walked about examining one glittering object after another, while King Loc mounted a throne of gold and ivory at one end of the hall, and watched her. 'Choose whatever you wish,' he said at last. A necklace of most lovely pearls was hanging from the wall, and after hesitating for a moment between that and a circlet of diamonds and sapphires, Abeille stretched up her hand towards it. But before she touched it her eyes lighted on a tiny piece of sky visible through a crack of the rock, and her hand dropped by her side. 'Little King Loc, let me go up to the earth once again,' she said.

Then King Loc made a sign to the treasurer, who opened a coffer full of nothing but precious stones, larger and more dazzling than were worn by any earthly monarch. 'Choose what you will, Abeille,' whispered King Loc.

But Abeille only shook her head.

'A drop of dew in the garden at Clarides is brighter to me than the best of those diamonds,' she answered, 'and the bluest of the stones are not as blue as the eyes of Youri.' And as she spoke a sharp pain ran through the heart of King Loc. For an instant he said nothing, then he lifted his head and looked at her. 'Only those who despise riches should possess them. Take this crown, from henceforth you are the Princess of the Gnomes.'

During thirty days no work was done in those underground regions, for a feast was held in honour of the new princess. At the end of that period the king appeared before Abeille, clad in his most splendid garments, and solemnly asked her to be his wife.

'Little King Loc,' answered the girl, 'I love you as you are, for your goodness and kindness to me; but never, never can I love you as anything else.'

The king sighed. It was only what he had expected; still, his disappointment was great, though he tried bravely to hide it, and even to smile as he said: 'Then, Abeille, will you promise me one thing? If there should come a day when you find that there is somebody whom you *could* love, will you tell me?'

And in her turn Abeille promised.

After this, in spite of the fact that everyone was just as kind to her as before, Abeille was no longer the merry child who passed all her days playing with the little gnomes. People who dwell under the earth grow up much faster than those who live on its surface, and, at thirteen, the girl was already a woman. Besides, King Loc's words had set her thinking; she spent many hours by herself, and her face was no longer round and rosy, but thin and pale. It was in vain that the gnomes did their best to entice her into her old games, they had lost their interest, and even her lute lay unnoticed on the ground.

But one morning a change seemed to come over her. Leaving the room hung with beautiful silks, where she usually sat alone, she entered the king's presence, and taking his hand she led him through long corridors till they came to a place where a strip of blue sky was to be seen.

'Little King Loc,' she said, turning her eyes upon him, 'let me behold my mother again, or I shall surely die.' Her voice shook, and her whole body trembled. Even an enemy might have pitied her; but the king, who loved her, answered nothing. All day long Abeille stayed there, watching the light fade, and the sky grow pale. By-and-by the stars came out, but the girl never moved from her place. Suddenly a hand touched her. She looked round with a start, and there was King Loc, covered from head to foot in a dark mantle, holding another over his arm. 'Put on this and follow me,' was all he said. But Abeille somehow knew that she was going to see her mother.

On, and on, and on they went, through passages where Abeille had never been before, and at length she was out in the world again. Oh! how beautiful it all was! How fresh was the air, and how sweet was the smell of the flowers! She felt as if she should die with joy; but at that moment King Loc lifted her off the ground, and, tiny though he was, carried her quite easily across the garden and through an open door into the silent castle.

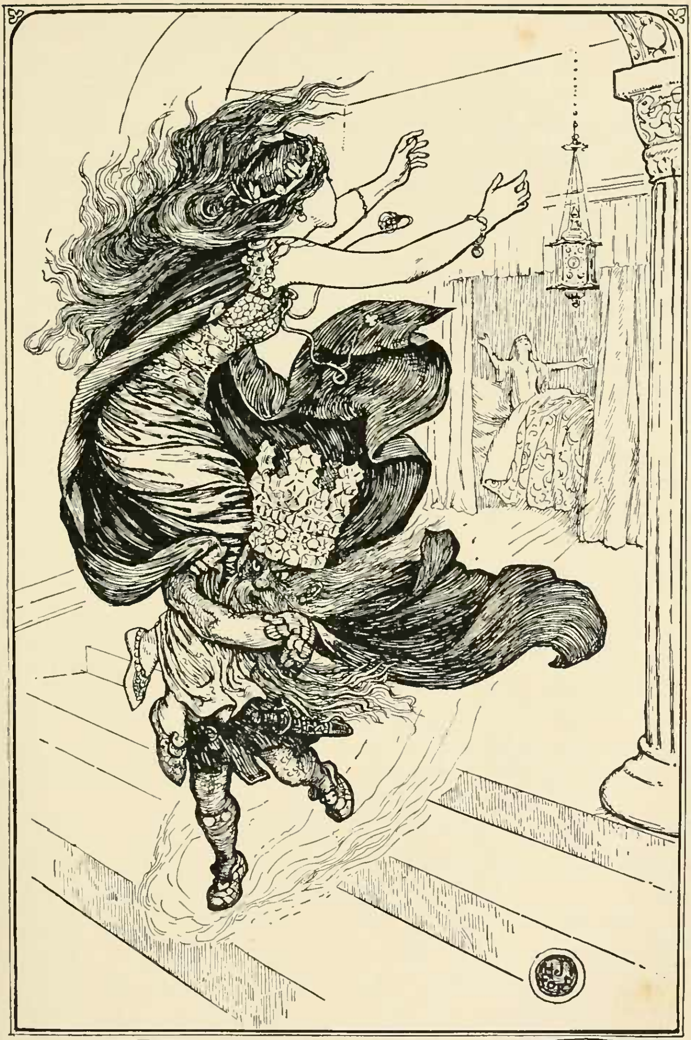
'Listen, Abeille,' he whispered softly. 'You have guessed where we are going, and you know that every night I send your mother a vision of you, and she talks to it in her dream, and smiles at it. To-night it will be no vision she sees, but you yourself; only remember, that if you touch her or speak to her my power is lost, and never more will she behold either you or your image.'

By this time they had reached the room which Abeille knew so well, and her heart beat violently as the gnome carried her over the threshold. By the light of a lamp hanging over the bed Abeille could see her mother, beautiful still, but with a face that had grown pale and sad. As she gazed the sadness vanished, and a bright smile came in its stead. Her mother's arms were stretched out towards her, and the girl, her eyes filled with tears of joy, was stooping to meet them, when King Loc hastily snatched her up, and bore her back to the realm of the gnomes.

If the king imagined that by granting Abeille's request he would make her happy, he soon found out his mistake, for all day long the girl sat weeping, paying no heed to the efforts of her friends to comfort her.

'Tell me what is making you so unhappy?' said King Loc, at last. And Abeille answered:

'Little King Loc, and all my friends here, you are so good and kind that I know that you are miserable when I am in trouble. I would be happy if I could, but it is stronger than I. I am weeping because I shall never see again Youri de Blanchelande, whom I love with all my heart. It is a worse grief than parting with my mother, for at least I know where she is and what she



KING LOC CARRIES ABEILLE AWAY FROM HER MOTHER

is doing; while, as for Youri, I cannot tell if he is dead or alive.'

The gnomes were all silent. Kind as they were, they were not mortals, and had never felt either great joys or deep sorrows. Only King Loc dimly guessed at something of both, and he went away to consult an old, old gnome, who lived in the lowest depth of the mountain, and had spectacles of every sort, that enabled him to see all that was happening, not only on the earth, but under the sea.

Nur, for such was his name, tried many of these spectacles before he could discover anything about Youri de Blanchelande.

'There he is!' he cried at last. 'He is sitting in the palace of the Undines, under the great lake; but he does not like his prison, and longs to be back in the world, doing great deeds.'

It was true. In the seven years that had passed since he had left the castle of Clarides to go with Abeille to the blue lake, Youri in his turn had become a man.

The older he grew the more weary he got of the petting and spoiling he received at the hands of the green-haired maidens, till, one day, he flung himself at the feet of the Undine queen, and implored permission to return to his old home.

The queen stooped down and stroked his hair.

'We cannot spare you,' she murmured gently. 'Stay here, and you shall be king, and marry me.'

'But it is Abeille I want to marry,' said the youth boldly. But he might as well have talked to the winds, for at last the queen grew angry, and ordered him to be put in a crystal cage which was built for him round a pointed rock.

It was here that King Loc, aided by the spectacles of Nur, found him after many weeks' journey. As we know, the gnomes walk slowly, and the way was long and difficult. Luckily, before he started, he had taken with him his magic ring, and the moment it touched the wall the crystal cage split from top to bottom.

'Follow that path, and you will find yourself in the world again,' he said to Youri; and without waiting to listen to the young man's thanks, set out on the road he had come.

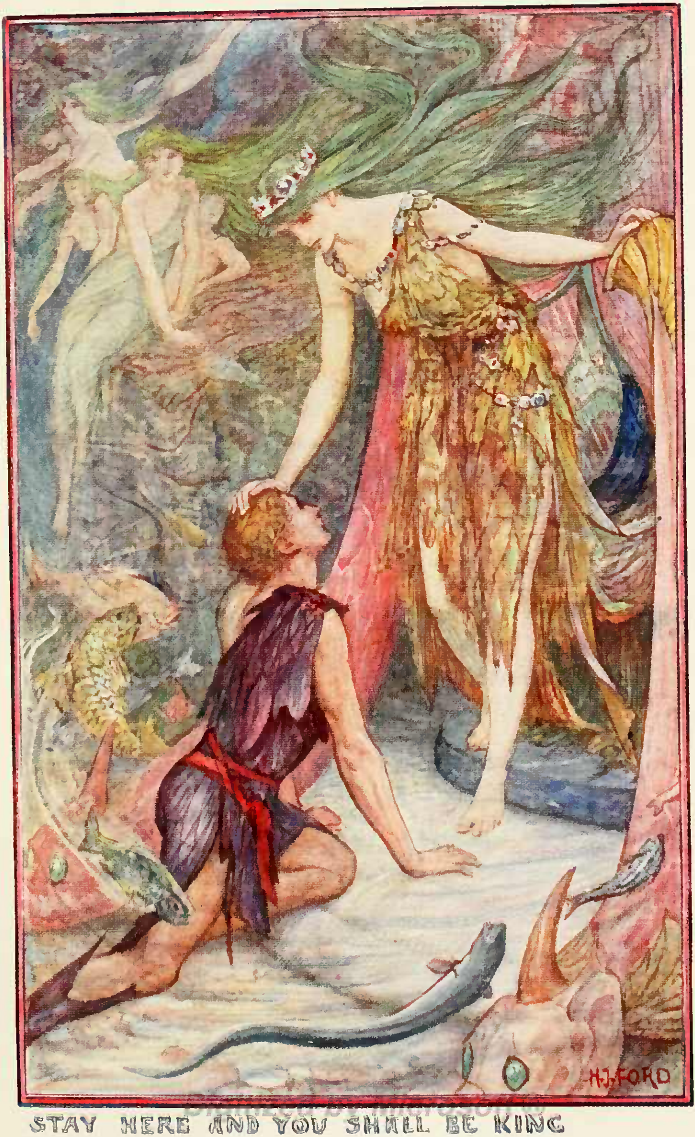
'Bog,' he cried to the little man on the crow, who had ridden to meet him, 'hasten to the palace and inform the Princess Abeille that Youri de Blanchelande, for seven years a captive in the kingdom of the Undines, has now returned to the castle of Clarides.'

The first person whom Youri met as he came out of the mountain was the tailor who had made all his clothes from the time that he came to live at the castle. Of this old friend, who was nearly beside himself with joy at the sight of the little master, lost for so many years, the count begged for news of his foster-mother and Abeille.

'Alas! my lord, where can you have been that you do not know that the Princess Abeille was carried off by the gnomes on the very day that you disappeared yourself? At least, so we guess. Ah! that day has left many a mark on our duchess! Yet she is not without a gleam of hope that her daughter is living yet, for every night the poor mother is visited by a dream which tells her all that the princess is doing.'

The good man went on to tell of all the changes that seven years had brought about in the village, but Youri heard nothing that he said, for his mind was busy with thoughts of Abeille.

At length he roused himself, and ashamed of his delay, he hastened to the chamber of the duchess, who held him in her arms as if she would never let him go. By-and-by, however, when she became calmer, he began to question her about Abeille, and how best to deliver



STAY HERE AND YOU SHALL BE KING

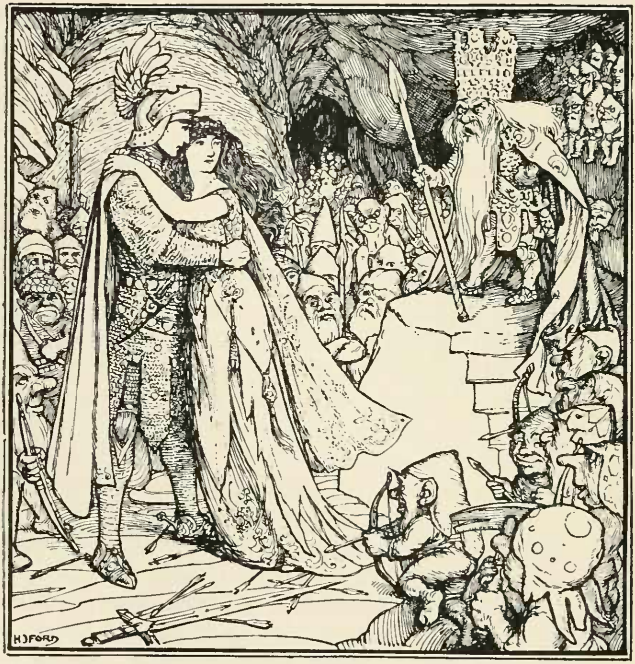
her from the power of the gnomes. The duchess then told him that she had sent out men in all directions to look for the children directly they were found to be missing, and that one of them had noticed a troop of little men far away on the mountains, evidently carrying a litter. He was hastening after them, when, at his feet, he beheld a tiny satin slipper, which he stooped to pick up. But as he did so a dozen of the gnomes had swarmed upon him like flies, and beat him about the head till he dropped the slipper, which they took away with them, leaving the poor man dizzy with pain. When he recovered his senses the group on the mountain had disappeared.

That night, when everyone was asleep, Youri and his old servant Francœur stole softly down into the armoury, and dressed themselves in light suits of chain armour, with helmets and short swords, all complete. Then they mounted two horses that Francœur had tied up in the forest, and set forth for the kingdom of the gnomes. At the end of an hour's hard riding, they came to the cavern which Francœur had heard from childhood led into the centre of the earth. Here they dismounted, and entered cautiously, expecting to find darkness as thick as what they had left outside. But they had only gone a few steps when they were nearly blinded by a sudden blaze of light, which seemed to proceed from a sort of portcullis door which barred the way in front of them.

'Who are you?' asked a voice. And the count answered:

'Youri de Blanchelande, who has come to rescue Abeille des Clarides.' And at these words the gate slowly swung open, and closed behind the two strangers.

Youri listened to the clang with a spasm of fear in his heart; then the desperate position he was in gave him courage. There was no retreat for him now, and in front was drawn up a large force of gnomes, whose arrows were falling like hail about him. He raised his shield to ward them off, and as he did so his eyes fell on a little man standing on a rock above the rest, with a crown on his head and a royal mantle on his shoulders. In an instant Youri had flung away his shield and sprung forward, regardless of the arrows that still fell about him.



'IS THIS THE MAN THAT YOU WISH TO MARRY ?'

'Oh, is it you, is it *really* you, my deliverer? And is it your subjects who hold as a captive Abeille whom I love?'

'I am King Loc,' was the answer. And the figure with the long beard bent his eyes kindly on the eager youth. 'If Abeille has lived with us all these years, for many of them she was quite happy. But the gnomes, of whom you think so little, are a just people, and they will not keep her against her will. Beg the princess to be good enough to come hither,' he added, turning to Rug.

Amidst a dead silence Abeille entered the vast space and looked around her. At first she saw nothing but a vast host of gnomes perched on the walls and crowding on the floor of the big hall. Then her eyes met those of Youri, and with a cry that came from her heart she darted towards him, and threw herself on his breast.

'Abeille,' said the king, when he had watched her for a moment, with a look of pain on his face, 'is this the man that you wish to marry?'

'Yes, Little King Loc, this is he and nobody else! And see how I can laugh now, and how happy I am!' And with that she began to cry.

'Hush, Abeille! there must be no tears to-day,' said Youri, gently stroking her hair. 'Come, dry your eyes, and thank King Loc, who rescued me from the cage in the realm of the Undines.'

As Youri spoke Abeille lifted her head, and a great light came into her face. At last she understood.

'You did that for me?' she whispered. 'Ah, Little King Loc——!'

So, loaded with presents, and followed by regrets, Abeille went home. In a few days the marriage took place; but however happy she was, and however busy she might be, never a month passed by without a visit from Abeille to her friends in the kingdom of the gnomes.

[Adapted and shortened from the story of *Abeille*, by M. Anatole France.]

'A LONG-BOW STORY'

One day a bunniah,[1] or banker, was walking along a country road when he overtook a farmer going in the same direction. Now the bunniah was very grasping, like most of his class, and was lamenting that he had had no chance of making any money that day; but at the sight of the man in front he brightened up wonderfully.

'That is a piece of luck,' he said to himself. 'Let me see if this farmer is not good for something'; and he hastened his steps.

After they had bid one another good day very politely, the bunniah said to the farmer:

'I was just thinking how dull I felt, when I beheld you, but since we are going the same way, I shall find the road quite short in such agreeable company.'

'With all my heart,' replied the farmer; 'but what shall we talk about? A city man like you will not care to hear about cattle and crops.'

'Oh,' said the bunniah, 'I'll tell you what we will do. We will each tell the other the wildest tale we can imagine, and he who first throws doubt on the other's story shall pay him a hundred rupees.'

To this the farmer agreed, and begged the bunniah to begin, as he was the bigger man of the two; and privately he made up his mind that, however improbable it might be, nothing should induce him to hint that he did not believe in the bunniah's tale. Thus politely pressed the great man started:

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[1] Grain merchant and banker, and generally a very greedy man.

'I was going along this road one day, when I met a merchant travelling with a great train of camels laden with merchandise——'

'Very likely,' murmured the farmer; 'I've seen that kind of thing myself.'

'No less than one hundred and one camels,' continued the bunniah, 'all tied together by their nose strings—nose to tail—and stretching along the road for almost half a mile——'

'Well?' said the farmer.

'Well, a kite swooped down on the foremost camel and bore him off, struggling, into the air, and by reason of them all being tied together the other hundred camels had to follow——'

'Amazing, the strength of that kite!' said the farmer. 'But—well—yes, doubtless, yes—well—one hundred and one camels—and what did he do with them?'

'You doubt it?' demanded the bunniah.

'Not a bit!' said the farmer heartily.

'Well,' continued the bunniah, 'it happened that the princess of a neighbouring kingdom was sitting in her private garden, having her hair combed by her maid, and she was looking upward, with her head thrown back, whilst the maid tugged away at the comb, when that wretched kite, with its prey, went soaring overhead; and, as luck would have it, the camels gave an extra kick just then, the kite lost his hold, and the whole hundred and one camels dropped right into the princess's left eye!'

'Poor thing!' said the farmer; 'it's so painful having anything in one's eye.'

'Well,' said the bunniah, who was now warming to his task, 'the princess shook her head, and sprang up, clapping her hand on her eye. "Oh dear!" she cried, "I've got something in my eye, and how it *does* smart!"'

'It always does,' observed the farmer; 'perfectly true. Well, what did the poor thing do?'

'At the sound of her cries, the maid came running to her assistance. "Let me look," said she; and with that she gave the princess's eyelid a twitch, and out came a camel, which the maid put in her pocket—'('Ah!' grunted the farmer)—'and then she just twisted up the corner of her headcloth and fished a hundred more of them out of the princess's eye, and popped them all into her pocket with the other.'

Here the bunniah gasped as one who is out of breath, but the farmer looked at him slowly. 'Well?' said he.

'I can't think of anything more now,' replied the bunniah. 'Besides, that is the end; what do you say to it?'

'Wonderful,' replied the farmer, 'and no doubt perfectly true!'

'Well, it is your turn,' said the bunniah. 'I am so anxious to hear your story. I am sure it will be very interesting.'

'Yes, I think it will,' answered the farmer, and he began:

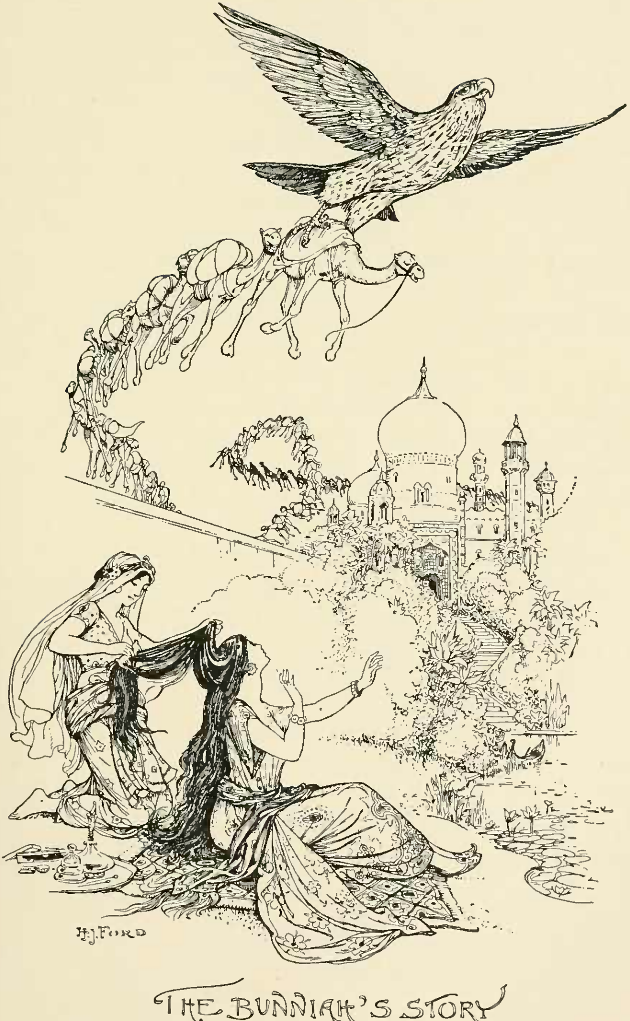
'My father was a very prosperous man. Five cows he had, and three yoke of oxen, and half a dozen buffaloes, and goats in abundance; but of all his possessions the thing he loved best was a mare. A well-bred mare she was—oh, a very fine mare!'

'Yes, yes,' interrupted the bunniah, 'get on!'

'I'm getting on,' said the farmer; 'don't you hurry me! Well, one day, as ill-luck would have it, he rode that mare to market with a torn saddle, which galled her so, that when they got home she had a sore on her back as big as the palm of your hand.'

Yes,' said the bunniah impatiently, 'what next?'

'It was June,' said the farmer, 'and you know how, in June, the air is full of dust-storms with rain at times? Well, the poor beast got dust in that wound, and what's



THE BUNNIAH'S STORY

more, with the dust some grains of wheat, and, what with the dust and the heat and the wet, that wheat sprouted and began to grow!'

'Wheat does when it gets a fair chance,' said the bunniah.

'Yes; and the next thing we knew was that there was a crop of wheat on that horse's back as big as anything you ever saw in a hundred-acre field, and we had to hire twenty men to help reap it!'

'One generally has to hire extra hands for reaping,' said the bunniah.

'And we got four hundred maunds of wheat off that mare's back!' continued the farmer.

'A good crop!' murmured the bunniah.

'And your father,' said the farmer, 'a poor wretch, with hardly enough to keep body and soul together—(the bunniah snorted, but was silent)—came to my father, and he said, putting his hands together as humble as could be——'

The bunniah here flashed a furious glance at his companion, but bit his lips and held his peace.

'"I haven't tasted food for a week. Oh! great master, let me have the loan of sixteen maunds of wheat from your store, and I will repay you."

'"Certainly, neighbour," answered my father; "take what you need, and repay it as you can."'

'Well?' demanded the bunniah with fury in his eye.

'Well, he took the wheat away with him,' replied the farmer; 'but he never repaid it, and it's a debt to this day. Sometimes I wonder whether I shall not go to law about it.'

Then the bunniah began running his thumb quickly up and down the fingers of his right hand, and his lips moved in quick calculation.

'What is the matter?' asked the farmer.

'The wheat is the cheaper; I'll pay you for the wheat,' said the bunniah, with the calmness of despair, as he remembered that by his own arrangement he was bound to give the farmer a hundred rupees.

And to this day they say in those parts, when a man owes a debt: 'Give me the money; or, if not that, give me at least the wheat.'

[This is from oral tradition.]

JACKAL OR TIGER?

One hot night, in Hindustan, a king and queen lay awake in the palace in the midst of the city. Every now and then a faint air blew through the lattice, and they hoped they were going to sleep, but they never did. Presently they became more broad awake than ever at the sound of a howl outside the palace.

'Listen to that tiger!' remarked the king.

'Tiger?' replied the queen. 'How should there be a tiger inside the city? It was only a jackal.'

'I tell you it was a tiger,' said the king.

'And I tell you that you were dreaming if you thought it was anything but a jackal,' answered the queen.

'I say it was a tiger,' cried the king; 'don't contradict me.'

'Nonsense!' snapped the queen. 'It was a jackal.' And the dispute waxed so warm that the king said at last:

'Very well, we'll call the guard and ask; and if it was a jackal I'll leave this kingdom to you and go away; and if it was a tiger then you shall go, and I will marry a new wife.'

'As you like,' answered the queen; 'there isn't any doubt which it was.'

So the king called the two soldiers who were on guard outside and put the question to them. But, whilst the dispute was going on, the king and queen had got so excited and talked so loud that the guards had heard nearly all they said, and one man observed to the other:

'Mind you declare that the king is right. It certainly was a jackal, but, if we say so, the king will probably not keep his word about going away, and we shall get into trouble, so we had better take his side.'

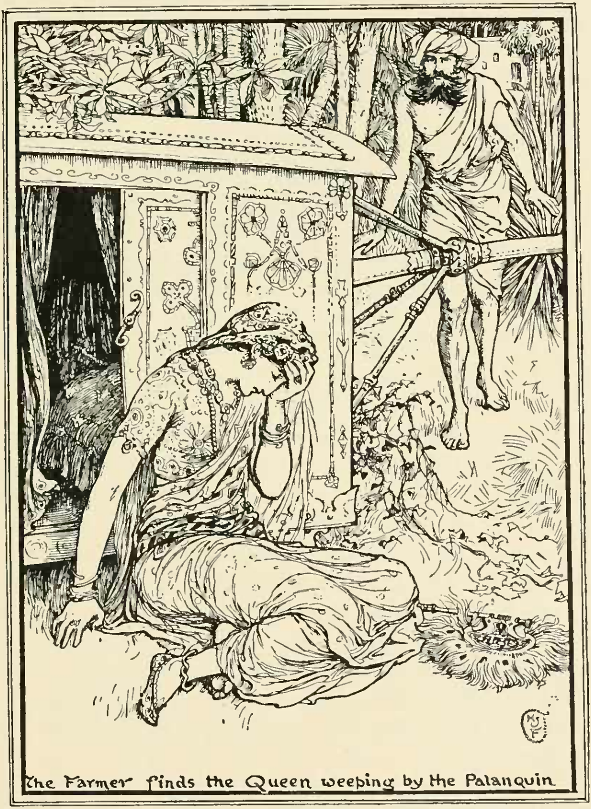
To this the other agreed; therefore, when the king asked them what animal they had seen, both the guards said it was certainly a tiger, and that the king was right of course, as he always was. The king made no remark, but sent for a palanquin, and ordered the queen to be placed in it, bidding the four bearers of the palanquin to take her a long way off into the forest and there leave her. In spite of her tears, she was forced to obey, and away the bearers went for three days and three nights until they came to a dense wood. There they set down the palanquin with the queen in it, and started home again.

Now the queen thought to herself that the king could not mean to send her away for good, and that as soon as he had got over his fit of temper he would summon her back; so she stayed quite still for a long time, listening with all her ears for approaching footsteps, but heard none. After a while she grew nervous, for she was all alone, and put her head out of the palanquin and looked about her. Day was just breaking, and birds and insects were beginning to stir; the leaves rustled in a warm breeze; but, although the queen's eyes wandered in all directions, there was no sign of any human being. Then her spirit gave way, and she began to cry.

It so happened that close to the spot where the queen's palanquin had been set down, there dwelt a man who had a tiny farm in the midst of the forest, where he and his wife lived alone far from any neighbours. As it was hot weather the farmer had been sleeping on the flat roof of his house, but was awakened by the sound of weeping. He jumped up and ran downstairs as fast as he could, and into the forest towards the place the sound came from, and there he found the palanquin.

'Oh, poor soul that weeps,' cried the farmer, standing a little way off, 'who are you?' At this salutation from a stranger the queen grew silent, dreading she knew not what.

'Oh, you that weep,' repeated the farmer, 'fear not to speak to me, for you are to me as a daughter. Tell me, who are you?'


The Farmer finds the Queen weeping by the Palanquin

His voice was so kind that the queen gathered up her courage and spoke. And when she had told her story, the farmer called his wife, who led her to their house, and gave her food to eat, and a bed to lie on. And in the farm, a few days later, a little prince was born, and by his mother's wish named Ameer Ali.

Years passed without a sign from the king. His wife might have been dead for all he seemed to care, though the queen still lived with the farmer, and the little prince had by this time grown up into a strong, handsome, and healthy youth. Out in the forest they seemed far from the world; very few ever came near them, and the prince was continually begging his mother and the farmer to be allowed to go away and seek adventures and to make his own living. But she and the wise farmer always counselled him to wait, until, at last, when he was eighteen years of age, they had not the heart to forbid him any longer. So he started off one early morning, with a sword by his side, a big brass pot to hold water, a few pieces of silver, and a galail[1] in his hand, with which to shoot birds as he travelled.

Many a weary mile he tramped day after day, until, one morning, he saw before him just such a forest as that in which he had been born and bred, and he stepped joyfully into it, like one who goes to meet an old friend. Presently, as he made his way through a thicket, he saw a pigeon which he thought would make a good dinner, so he fired a pellet at it from his galail, but missed the pigeon, which fluttered away with a startled clatter. At the same instant he heard a great clamour from beyond the thicket, and, on reaching the spot, he found an ugly old woman streaming wet and crying loudly as she lifted from her head an earthen vessel with a hole in it from which the water was pouring. When she saw the prince with his galail in his hand, she called out:

'Oh, wretched one! why must you choose an old woman like me to play your pranks upon? Where am I to get a fresh pitcher instead of this one that you have broken with your foolish tricks? And how am I to go so far for water twice when one journey wearies me?'

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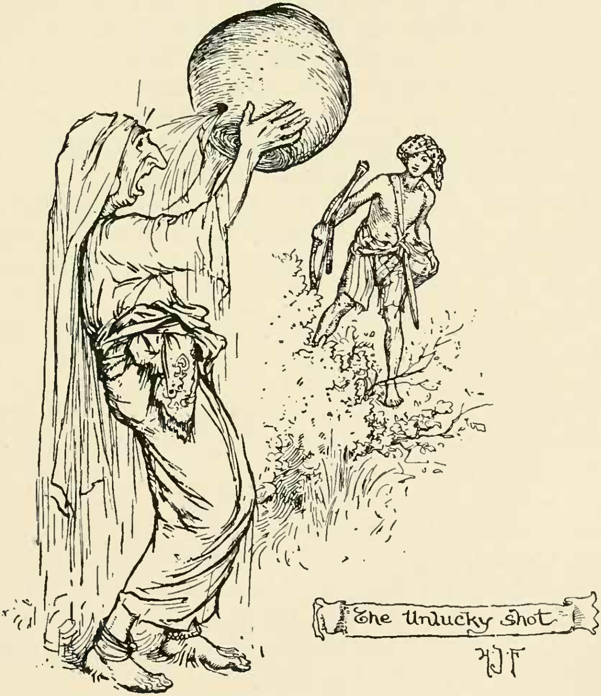
[1] A galail is a double-stringed bow from which bullets or pellets of hard dried clay can be fired with considerable force and precision.

'But, mother,' replied the prince, 'I played no trick upon you! I did but shoot at a pigeon that should have served me for dinner, and as my pellet missed it, it must have broken your pitcher. But, in exchange, you shall have my brass pot, and that will not break easily; and as for getting water, tell me where to find it, and I'll fetch it while you dry your garments in the sun, and carry it whither you will.'


The Unlucky Shot

At this the old woman's face brightened. She showed him where to seek the water, and when he returned a few minutes later with his pot filled to the brim, she led the way without a word, and he followed. In a short while they came to a hut in the forest, and as they drew near it Ameer Ali beheld in the doorway the loveliest damsel his eyes had ever looked on. At the sight of a stranger she drew her veil about her and stepped into the hut, and much as he wished to see her again Ameer Ali could think of no excuse by which to bring her back, and so, with a heavy heart, he made his salutation, and bade the old woman farewell. But when he had gone a little way she called after him:

'If ever you are in trouble or danger, come to where you now stand and cry: "Fairy of the forest! Fairy of the forest, help me now!" And I will listen to you.'

The prince thanked her and continued his journey, but he thought little of the old woman's saying, and much of the lovely damsel. Shortly afterwards he arrived at a city; and, as he was now in great straits, having come to the end of his money, he walked straight to the palace of the king and asked for employment. The king said he had plenty of servants and wanted no more; but the young man pleaded so hard that at last the rajah was sorry for him, and promised that he should enter his bodyguard on the condition that he would undertake any service which was especially difficult or dangerous. This was just what Ameer Ali wanted, and he agreed to do whatever the king might wish.

Soon after this, on a dark and stormy night, when the river roared beneath the palace walls, the sound of a woman weeping and wailing was heard above the storm. The king ordered a servant to go and see what was the matter; but the servant, falling on his knees in terror, begged that he might not be sent on such an errand, particularly on a night so wild, when evil spirits and witches were sure to be abroad. Indeed, so frightened was he, that the king, who was very kind-hearted, bade another to go in his stead, but each one showed the same strange fear. Then Ameer Ali stepped forward:

'This is my duty, your majesty,' he said; 'I will go.'

The king nodded, and off he went. The night was as dark as pitch, and the wind blew furiously and drove the rain in sheets into his face; but he made his way down to the ford under the palace walls and stepped into the flooded water. Inch by inch, and foot by foot he fought his way across, now nearly swept off his feet by some sudden swirl or eddy, now narrowly escaping being caught in the branches of some floating tree that came tossing and swinging down the stream. At length he emerged, panting and dripping wet, on the other side. Close by the bank stood a gallows, and on the gallows hung the body of some evil-doer, whilst from the foot of it came the sound of sobbing that the king had heard.

Ameer Ali was so grieved for the one who wept there that he thought nothing of the wildness of the night or of the roaring river. As for ghosts and witches, they had never troubled him, so he walked up towards the gallows where crouched the figure of the woman.

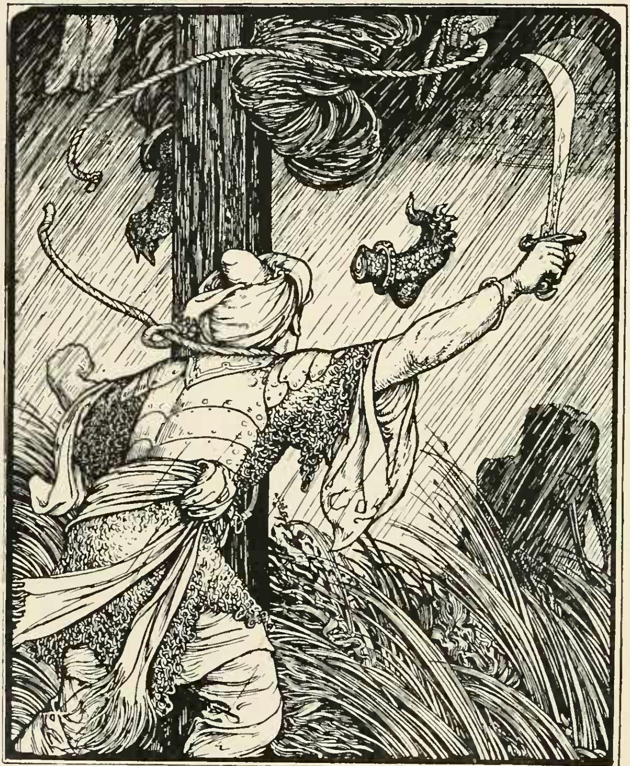
'What ails you?' he said.

Now the woman was not really a woman at all, but a horrid kind of witch who really lived in Witchland, and had no business on earth. If ever a man strayed into Witchland the ogresses used to eat him up, and this old witch thought she would like to catch a man for supper, and that is why she had been sobbing and crying in hopes that someone out of pity might come to her rescue.

So when Ameer Ali questioned her, she replied:

'Ah, kind sir, it is my poor son who hangs upon that gallows; help me to get him down and I will bless you for ever.'

Ameer Ali thought that her voice sounded rather eager than sorrowful, and he suspected that she was not telling the truth, so he determined to be very cautious.



AMEER ALI WINS THE ANKLET

'That will be rather difficult,' he said, 'for the gallows is high, and we have no ladder.'

'Ah, but if you will just stoop down and let me climb upon your shoulders,' answered the old witch, 'I think

I could reach him.' And her voice now sounded so cruel that Ameer Ali was sure that she intended some evil. But he only said:

'Very well, we will try.' With that he drew his sword, pretending that he needed it to lean upon, and bent so that the old woman could clamber on to his back, which she did very nimbly. Then, suddenly, he felt a noose slipped over his neck, and the old witch sprang from his shoulders on to the gallows, crying:

'Now, foolish one, I have got you, and will kill you for my supper.'

But Ameer Ali gave a sweep upwards with his sharp sword to cut the rope that she had slipped round his neck, and not only cut the cord but cut also the old woman's foot as it dangled above him; and with a yell of pain and anger she vanished into the darkness.

Ameer Ali then sat down to collect himself a little, and felt upon the ground by his side an anklet that had evidently fallen off the old witch's foot. This he put into his pocket, and as the storm had by this time passed over he made his way back to the palace. When he had finished his story, he took the anklet out of his pocket and handed it to the king, who, like everyone else, was amazed at the glory of the jewels which composed it. Indeed, Ameer Ali himself was astonished, for he had slipped the anklet into his pocket in the dark and had not looked at it since. The king was delighted at its beauty, and having praised and rewarded Ameer Ali, he gave the anklet to his daughter, a proud and spoiled princess.

Now in the women's apartments in the palace there hung two cages, in one of which was a parrot and in the other a starling, and these two birds could talk as well as human beings. They were both pets of the princess who always fed them herself, and the next day, as she was walking grandly about with her treasure tied round her ankle, she heard the starling say to the parrot:

'Oh, Toté' (that was the parrot's name), 'how do you think the princess looks in her new jewel?'

'Think?' snapped the parrot, who was cross because they hadn't given him his bath that morning, 'I think she looks like a washerwoman's daughter, with one shoe on and the other off! Why doesn't she wear two of them, instead of going about with one leg adorned and the other bare?'

When the princess heard this she burst into tears; and sending for her father she declared that he must get her another such an anklet to wear on the other leg, or she would die of shame. So the king sent for Ameer Ali and told him that he must get a second anklet exactly like the first within a month, or he should be hanged, for the princess would certainly die of disappointment.

Poor Ameer Ali was greatly troubled at the king's command, but he thought to himself that he had, at any rate, a month in which to lay his plans. He left the palace at once, and inquired of everyone where the finest jewels were to be got; but though he sought night and day he never found one to compare with the anklet. At last only a week remained, and he was in sore difficulty, when he remembered the Fairy of the forest, and determined to go without loss of time and seek her. Therefore away he went, and after a day's travelling he reached the cottage in the forest, and, standing where he had stood when the old woman called to him, he cried:

'Fairy of the forest! Fairy of the forest! Help me! help me!'

Then there appeared in the doorway the beautiful girl he had seen before, whom in all his wanderings he had never forgotten.

'What is the matter?' she asked, in a voice so soft that he listened like one struck dumb, and she had to repeat the question before he could answer. Then he told her his story, and she went within the cottage and came back with two wands, and a pot of boiling water. The two wands she planted in the ground about six feet apart, and then, turning to him, she said:

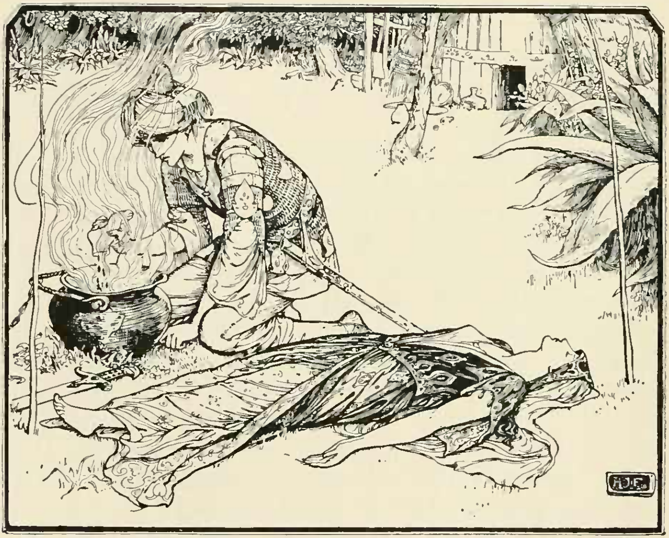
'I am going to lie down between these two wands. You must then draw your sword and cut off my foot, and, as soon as you have done that, you must seize it and hold it over the cauldron, and every drop of blood that falls from it into the water will become a jewel. Next you must change the wands so that the one that stood at my head is at my feet, and the one at my feet stands at my head, and place the severed foot against the wound and it will heal, and I shall become quite well again as before.'

At first Ameer Ali declared that he would sooner be hanged twenty times over than treat her so roughly; but at length she persuaded him to do her bidding. He nearly fainted himself with horror when he found that, after the cruel blow which lopped her foot off, she lay as one lifeless; but he held the severed foot over the cauldron, and, as drops of blood fell from it, and he saw each turn in the water into shining gems, his heart took courage. Very soon there were plenty of jewels in the cauldron, and he quickly changed the wands, placed the severed foot against the wound, and immediately the two parts became one as before. Then the maiden opened her eyes, sprang to her feet, and drawing her veil about her, ran into the hut, and would not come out or speak to him any more. For a long while he waited, but, as she did not appear, he gathered up the precious stones and returned to the palace. He easily got someone to set the jewels, and found that there were enough to make, not only one, but three rare and beautiful anklets, and these he duly presented to the king on the very day that his month of grace was over.

The king embraced him warmly, and made him rich gifts; and the next day the vain princess put two anklets on each foot, and strutted up and down in them admiring herself in the mirrors that lined her room.

'Oh, Toté,' asked the starling, 'how do you think our princess looks now in these fine jewels?'

'Ugh!' growled the parrot, who was really always cross in the mornings, and never recovered his temper until after lunch, 'she's got all her beauty at one end of her now; if she had a few of those fine gew-gaws round her neck and wrists she would look better; but now, to my mind, she looks more than ever like the washerwoman's daughter dressed up.'



Poor princess! she wept and stormed and raved until she made herself quite ill; and then she declared to her father that unless she had bracelets and necklace to match the anklets she would die.

Again the king sent for Ameer Ali, and ordered him to get a necklace and bracelets to match those anklets within a month, or be put to a cruel death.

And again Ameer Ali spent nearly the whole month searching for the jewels, but all in vain. At length he made his way to the hut in the forest, and stood and cried:

'Fairy of the forest! Fairy of the forest! Help me! help me!'

Once more the beautiful maiden appeared at his summons and asked what he wanted, and when he had told her she said he must do exactly as he had done the first time, except that now he must cut off both her hands and her head. Her words turned Ameer Ali pale with horror; but she reminded him that no harm had come to her before, and at last he consented to do as she bade him. From her severed hands and head there fell into the cauldron bracelets and chains of rubies and diamonds, emeralds and pearls that surpassed any that ever were seen. Then the head and hands were joined on to the body, and left neither sign nor scar. Full of gratitude, Ameer Ali tried to speak to her, but she ran into the house and would not come back, and he was forced to leave her and go away laden with the jewels.

When, on the day appointed, Ameer Ali produced a necklace and bracelets each more beautiful and priceless than the last, the king's astonishment knew no bounds, and as for his daughter she was nearly mad with joy. The very next morning she put on all her finery, and thought that now, at least, that disagreeable parrot could find no fault with her appearance, and she listened eagerly when she heard the starling say:

'Oh, Toté, how do you think our princess is looking *now*?'

'Very fine, no doubt,' grumbled the parrot; 'but what is the use of dressing up like that for oneself only? She ought to have a husband—why doesn't she marry the man who got her all these splendid things?'

Then the princess sent for her father and told him that she wished to marry Ameer Ali.

'My dear child,' said her father, 'you really are very difficult to please, and want something new every day. It certainly is time you married someone, and if you choose this man, of course he shall marry you.'

So the king sent for Ameer Ali, and told him that within a month he proposed to do him the honour of marrying him to the princess, and making him heir to the throne.

On hearing this speech Ameer Ali bowed low and answered that he had done and would do the king all the service that lay in his power, save only this one thing. The king, who considered his daughter's hand a prize for any man, flew into a passion, and the princess was more furious still. Ameer Ali was instantly thrown into the most dismal prison that they could find, and ordered to be kept there until the king had time to think in what way he should be put to death.

Meanwhile the king determined that the princess ought in any case to be married without delay, so he sent forth heralds throughout the neighbouring countries, proclaiming that on a certain day any person fitted for a bridegroom and heir to the throne should present himself at the palace.

When the day came, all the court were gathered together, and a great crowd assembled of men, young and old, who thought that they had as good a chance as anyone else to gain both the throne and the princess. As soon as the king was seated, he called upon an usher to summon the first claimant. But, just then, a farmer, who stood in front of the crowd, cried out that he had a petition to offer.

'Well, hasten then,' said the king; 'I have no time to waste.'

'Your majesty,' said the farmer, 'has now lived and administered justice long in this city, and will know that the tiger who is king of beasts hunts only in the forest, whilst jackals hunt in every place where there is something to be picked up.'

'What is all this? what is all this?' asked the king. 'The man must be mad!'

'No, your majesty,' answered the farmer; 'I would only remind your majesty that there are plenty of jackals gathered to-day to try and claim your daughter and kingdom: every city has sent them, and they wait hungry and eager; but do not, O king, mistake or pretend again to mistake the howl of a jackal for the hunting cry of a tiger.'

The king turned first red and then pale.

'There is,' continued the farmer, 'a royal tiger bred in the forest who has the first and only true claim to your throne.'

'Where? what do you mean?' stammered the king, growing pale as he listened.

'In prison,' replied the farmer; 'if your majesty will clear this court of the jackals I will explain.'

'Clear the court!' commanded the king; and, very unwillingly, the visitors left the palace.

'Now tell me what riddle this is,' said he.

Then the farmer told the king and his ministers how he had rescued the queen and brought up Ameer Ali; and he fetched the old queen herself, whom he had left outside. At the sight of her the king was filled with shame and self-reproach, and wished he could have lived his life over again, and not have married the mother of the proud princess, who caused him endless trouble until her death.

'My day is past,' said he. And he gave up his crown to his son Ameer Ali, who went once more and called to the forest fairy to provide him with a queen to share his throne.

'There is only one person I will marry,' said he. And this time the maiden did not run away, but agreed to be his wife. So the two were married without delay, and lived long and reigned happily.

As for the old woman whose pitcher Ameer Ali had broken, she was the forest maiden's fairy godmother, and when she was no longer needed to look after the girl she gladly returned to fairyland.

The old king has never been heard to contradict his wife any more. If he even looks as if he does not agree with her, she smiles at him and says :

'Is it the tiger, then? or the jackal?' And he has not another word to say.

THE COMB AND THE COLLAR

Once upon a time there was a king of Lombardy who, though he was uglier than any of his subjects, loved beauty in others, so he married a wife who was declared by everyone to be the handsomest of women; and, whispered some, the most ill-natured also. Certainly she could not endure the sight of a pretty person, and her ladies were all the plainest of their sex. Worse than all, she was desperately jealous of the king's son and daughter by his former wife.

Unfortunately, in spite of all her evil qualities, the king was her complete slave, and badly though she treated the boy, the lovely princess was made to suffer ten times as much. Not contented with giving the girl, for a governess, a woman whose temper was as bad as the queen's own, the cruel stepmother did everything she could think of to spoil the girl's beauty, and to force her to appear as ugly as she was herself; but, try as she might, when the hideous clothes and frightful brown paint had been removed, her loveliness shone out as bright as ever.

Now the king of Lombardy was cousin to the Archduke of Placenza, who had lately lost his reason, to the great grief of his son and daughter, Perarthrites and Ferrandina. The doctors having all failed to restore him to health, the prince and princess sent a messenger to consult a famous enchantress, called the Mother of Sheaths, because everyone who visited her brought with him a knife, which she thrust into one of the sheaths with which her cavern was lined. However, they obtained little comfort from the witch, who bade them 'seek their father's wits in the place where he had lost them.' Against the wishes of the chief ministers, Perarthrites and Ferrandina rode off to the mysterious castle where the king had slept when his terrible fate had overtaken him, and, once inside the gates, nothing more was heard of them.

When three weeks had passed and still there was no news, the king's chief minister called a council to talk over the matter, and, at the end, it was decided that a company of distinguished persons should visit the Mother of Sheaths, and that the knives they must take with them should be of pure gold, richly set with precious stones. The witch was so pleased with the beauty of the gifts that she not only listened attentively to their story, but proceeded to a hole in the cavern, from which she drew out a little case containing a comb, and a steel collar, fastened by a gold key.

'Carry this comb and the collar to every court until you find a lady beautiful enough to unlock the collar, and a man good enough to draw the comb from its case. When you have discovered these, you can return whence you came.'

'But I do not see,' said the chamberlain, 'how that will help us to bring back our lost prince and princess.'

'It is all I can do for you,' answered the Mother of Sheaths; and she went into the back of the cavern, where they dared not follow her.

For the next few months the mad king's principal ministers wandered from one court to another, till at last they reached Lombardy, where they found that their story had already travelled before them. As soon as they appeared in the presence-chamber the king received them with open arms, for in his heart he had no doubt that his wife was the peerless beauty destined to unfasten the collar. And, indeed, if paint and hair-dye and magnificent dresses could have ensured her doing so, he would certainly have been right. But, blinded by his love for this wicked woman, he had really no idea that her charms were not her own.

At the appointed hour the queen entered the throne-room, having by her side the young princess, in the most grievous plight imaginable. Her dress was so contrived as to give the idea that she had a hump; her pink-and-white skin was thickly covered with yellow paint, and her black hair all hidden by a close-fitting brown cloth cap. Murmurs of indignation rose on all sides, and the ambassadors, who had frequently heard the princess compared to the lovely Ferrandina, were dumb with astonishment. As for the king, he could hardly raise his eyes from the ground, so ashamed was he; and signing to his son to take his place, he withdrew from the scene.

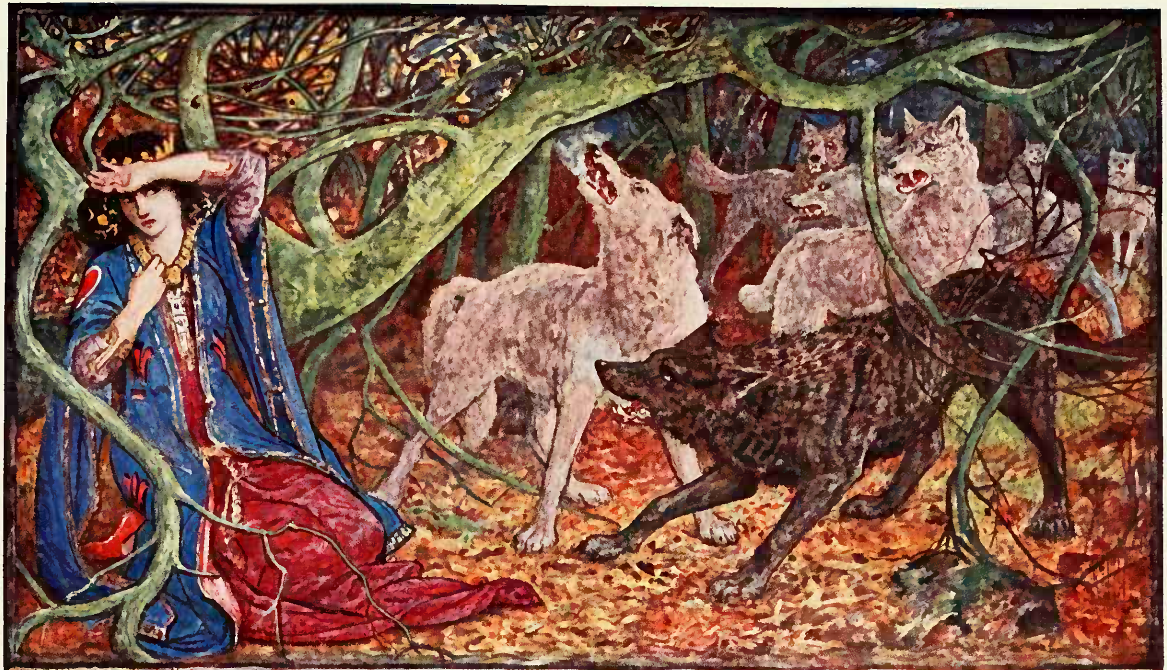
Mounting the throne, the prince commanded the trial to begin at once, and the collar was handed to the princess's governess, who, being one of the ugliest women that ever was seen, naturally failed to turn the key. Seizing the chance of his being for a short time in power, the prince resolved to punish her cruelties towards his sister, and especially this last one, to which she had prompted the queen, and ordered her to be taken out and executed, which was done, with great good will, by the attendants. He then further commanded the ladies in waiting to attend his sister to her apartments, and bathe her and dress her in the queen's most splendid robes, as she had none of her own; and the queen, though gnashing her teeth with anger, for once dared not interfere. More quickly than could have been expected, the princess returned, looking so beautiful that if anyone had doubted before who would be able to unlock the collar they were instantly convinced. The prince glanced at her, but said nothing, and, signing to one of the ambassadors, he ordered him to make trial of the comb. One by one each man present did his best to remove it from its case, and one by one each was forced to own himself beaten. At length only the prince remained, but as he was the judge he must wait till the last.

After the men had finished, the ladies of the court had the collar presented to them according to rank, but none could even turn the key. Finally it was handed to the queen, who managed to open it a little way. Her heart beat with triumph, but immediately it closed again with a snap, and she sank back, fainting from disappointment.

By this time there were only left the prince and his sister; and no sooner did he touch the case than it opened of itself, while the lock of the collar yielded directly the princess took hold of the key. Cries of delight rose from the courtiers and attendants; but these were interrupted by a whirlwind accompanied by thick darkness, and followed by an earthquake.

When all was calm again, and the sun shining, the prince and princess had disappeared.

Although the king's son and daughter were the only persons who had vanished in the storm, unluckily they had been carried off in opposite directions. The rapid motion through the air deprived the princess of her senses, which she nearly lost a second time, from fright, when she was set down alone in the middle of a thick forest. She ran wildly about, calling to her brother to come to her aid; but her cries only attracted the attention of some hungry wolves, who sprung towards her with their jaws gaping and their red tongues hanging out. Falling on her knees, she covered her face with one hand, unconsciously grasping the collar with the other, and awaited her doom. Already she could feel their hot breath on



the Princess and the wolves in the forest

MARCH . 1907 .
H J Ford

her cheek, and crouched lower and lower, when the eyes of the foremost wolf caught sight of the collar. With a howl that echoed through the forest he bounded away, followed by his companions.

As soon as the princess had recovered from the shock she rose and fled, without knowing whither, until she found herself in a broad road, and beheld, approaching her, a flock of sheep driven by two shepherds. She hastened towards them in order to implore their help, when suddenly the sheep caught sight of her collar and instantly scattered in all directions.

'I must have something about me which frightens all beasts,' she thought, and took great comfort therefrom; and in good spirits she went her way, till she came to the gates of an old castle. She was just about to enter and beg for a night's shelter, when a snow white fox ran across the road, and stopped in front of her.

He was so pretty, and had such bright beseeching eyes, that the princess hastily tucked the collar under her dress, lest he too should flee at the sight of it. Very gently she drew near, hoping he might follow her into the castle, but he only set off in another direction, and, tired though she was, something forced the girl to follow him. Thankful indeed was she when he turned a corner and sat down before the door of a tiny palace, which was built on the bank of a river. When she came up he took the hem of her dress between his teeth and led her into a room where there was a table covered with milk and fruit. After she had eaten and drunk, she lay down upon a pile of cushions, with the fox at her feet, and fell asleep to dream of her lost brother.

If the princess was dreaming of her brother, he was no less thinking of her, on the wild seashore, whither the whirlwind had cast him. All was bleak and bare, except a green island which he could only see from the top of a high rock where he passed all his days, gazing on the waving palm trees and glittering waterfalls in the distance.

'Suppose she should be there?' he said to himself; and though there was no reason to expect that the princess should be in that place more than in any other, he could not get the notion out of his head.

A song, sung in the loveliest voice he had ever heard, roused the young man from his musings, and he instantly turned in the direction from which it had come. But though the singer seemed close to him he could see her nowhere, and indeed, no sooner had he reached one spot than the voice sounded in another direction, and he followed it up and down, till he was suddenly stopped by the sight of a large fish's skin, which lay stretched on the sand between the sea and the rocks. The thing was so ugly, that he stepped aside in disgust, and at that instant something leapt into the sea behind his back. This caused him to look round. The fish's skin was no longer there, but in a cave in the rock behind it he discovered a bath of ebony lined with gold, which glittered in the sunlight.

Days passed without any adventures, and the prince had almost made up his mind to leave the shore, and to seek his sister inland, when once more he heard the voice that had so charmed him, and beheld the bloody skin lying on the sand, and the bath, now filled with water, in the grotto. Little sleep had he that night, and before the dawn he hid himself behind the rocks, determined not to move from the place till the fish should come back again.

He had not very long to wait, for with the first rays of the sun there appeared, out to sea, a shining white object which was blown by gentle breezes towards the shore. As it came nearer he beheld a maiden, of dazzling loveliness, seated in a shell where blues and pinks and greens all melted into each other. In her hand she held the rope with which the shell was guided.

The prince was so bewildered at her beauty that he forgot that he was in hiding, and, rushing out, sank on his knees on the sands, holding out his hands towards this wonderful vision. But as he did so the comb and its case fell out of his pocket, and at the sight the lady uttered a wild shriek, and, steering her shell round, vanished speedily in the direction of the island. Throwing off his clothes, the prince was preparing to swim after her, when he perceived beside him a snow white fox, looking the same way, and making frantic signs with his paws, till a small boat put out and set sail towards them, to the great joy of the little creature.

When the boat drew up to the beach, the fox waved his paw towards the prince's clothes, which he took to mean that he was to put them on again. This done, they both got in, and had just pushed off, when the prince suddenly recollected that the sight of the comb had frightened away the beautiful lady. In a transport of fury he raised his hand to fling it into the sea, but the fox sprang on him and held on so tightly to his arm that he could not lift it. At that moment a horseman on the shore let fly an arrow at the fox, with so true an aim that the little creature fell heavily into the well of the boat, and closed its eyes, like one who has received his death-blow. The grief of the prince was sore. He instantly leaped to land, but the murderer was already far distant. When the young man turned round again, the boat and the fox were nowhere to be seen.

An approaching storm drove him into the grotto, which was lighted up by a multitude of tapers, each one being in the shape of a knife half out of its sheath. Over the bath was a tent-shaped covering of white, embroidered with sheaths, and from beneath it came a voice:

'Prince, will you trust me whatever happens, knowing that my heart is yours, and as I feel that yours is mine? But, beware, for if you give the smallest sign of fear, when the tent is opened, you will lose me for ever.'

She did well to warn him; and even then he had much ado to keep the colour in his cheeks and his hand from trembling, for a crocodile's head with snapping jaws advanced towards him. With a mighty effort he managed to remain still, and to gaze steadily at the horrible beast, and as he did so, the head bent backwards, and beneath it was seen the lovely countenance of the Lady of the Shell.

'Quick! prince! quick! the time is flying, comb me at once or I shall vanish from your sight.' At her words he took out the comb, but found to his surprise that it needed all his strength to draw it from its sheath. And, strange to say, that in proportion as the comb emerged from its sheath the lady's head was freed from its horrible covering, and her body rose a little more out of the water. When her shoulders and arms were freed, she called to him:

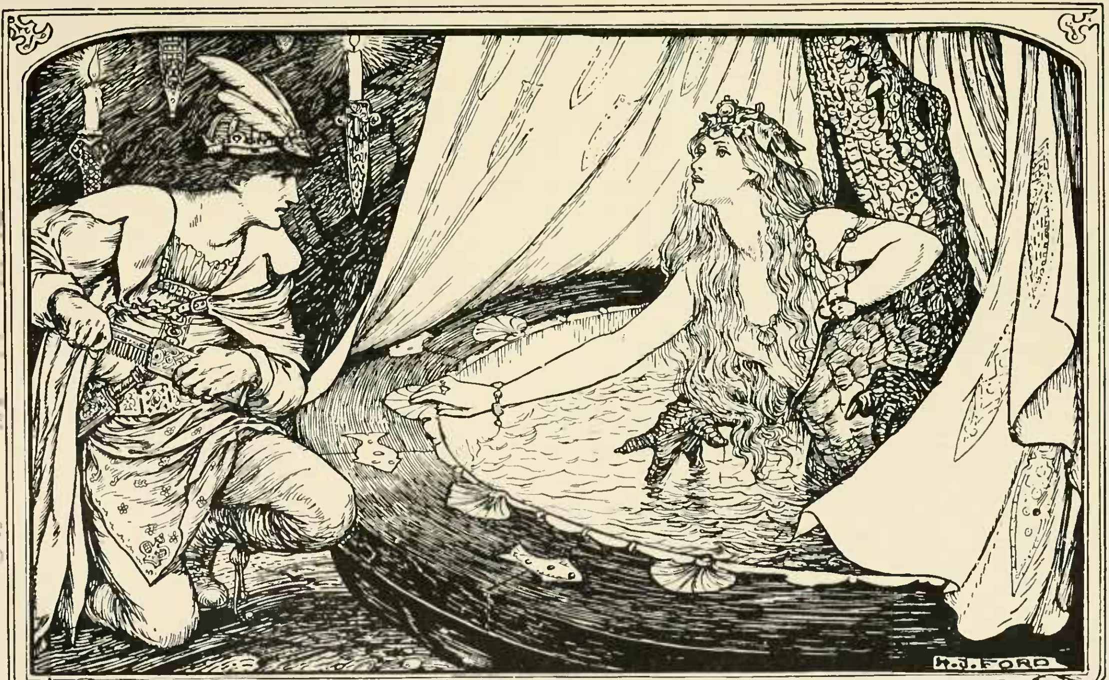
'Enough, so far you have obeyed my orders. Now burn my skin.'

'Ah, that I can *never* do,' cried he; but the lady cut him short.

'Then we shall both rue it for ever,' she said gravely; 'for I can only be the wife of him who will burn my skin.' And while he still stood hesitating, the curtains of the tent fell back on her, and the tapers fizzled out.

Bitterly repenting his slowness, he wandered towards the forest where a fire was burning, hardly knowing what he did; but on his way he almost fell over the skin, which was lying across his path.

'Ah, fool that I was! This must be the skin she wished me to burn,' said he. And seizing it in both hands he flung it into the fire, where it exploded with a terrific noise. At first he rushed off to some distance, not knowing what might next befall, but after a while found that his steps had led him back to the place of the fire. The skin had gone and left no traces, but among the cinders he beheld something shining, which proved to be the magic collar. Ah! then his sister, for whom he had so greatly longed, must be near at last! And before he



QUICK PRINCE QUICK THE TIME IS FLYING COMB ME AT ONCE

could turn his head or pick up the collar, her arms were round his neck, and everything else was forgotten.

'You shall tell your story first,' she said, when at length they could speak. And so he did; but his head was so full of the Lady of the Shell that he forgot to say anything about the fox. And it was well that he had forgotten, for when the princess had poured forth her own adventures, she ended up by speaking of all she owed to the little white fox.

'You cannot even guess the care he took of me in the little palace. But though nothing could exceed his kindness, I saw by his eyes that there was something he wanted me to give him, but I could not tell what. Alas! the day came that I learnt it to my cost. I had hidden the collar in a thick bush, lest the fox should catch sight of it and be scared away as the other animals had been. But, one day, when we were in the garden, the sun happened to shine straight on it, and he sprang towards it with every sign of delight. He was about to seize it between his teeth when it closed with a loud noise. The fox fled away with a piercing scream, and though I have sought him far and wide, I have never seen him since. I was here when you flung the skin into the cinders, and no doubt, in my hurry to escape, the collar must have dropped from me. Ah, dear brother,' she continued with tears in her eyes, 'I can no longer live without my beloved fox; help me, I entreat you, to find him.'

So great was her grief that the prince dared not tell her what sad fate had overtaken the poor little animal, and trusted that time might soothe her. He assured her that he would go with her wherever she desired if she would grant him this one day to spend on the seashore; and with this the princess was forced to be content.

The prince was standing on the rock, looking out towards the lovely island, and straining his eyes to see the white sail once more, when frightful shrieks from the wood a little way off caused him to hasten with all his speed in that direction. He soon perceived a knight on horseback, with a bow slung to his back, struggling to lift a woman on to his saddle. The knight's surprise at the sight of a man in this desolate spot caused him to drop the woman's arm, and she rushed to take shelter behind her defender, who, to his amazement, then recognised his step-mother.

'How did you come here?' he asked coldly, more than half regretting that he had not left her to her fate; but she read what was in his heart, and fell on her knees before him.

'Oh, forgive me my wickedness,' she cried, 'for indeed I have repented of it long ago, and come to the aid of your father who has been sorely smitten by that mad archduke from whom you have just saved me! There is no time to pursue him,' she added, as the prince started at the sound of the vanishing hoofs; and as they pushed their way along the path she told him all that had happened since they had last met.

'From the moment that the king knew of my cruelty to your sister,' said she, 'he vowed he would never see me again, and left the court in search of you both. I followed him secretly, but not being able to gain any tidings of him, consulted the Mother of Sheaths, who took me to rest in that island where the palm trees are waving. There she showed me a lovely princess who, under a spell, was forced daily to take the form of a crocodile, and when the dreaded moment arrived the skin appeared before her, and, shudder as she might, some unseen power impelled her to wrap herself in it and plunge into the sea. It is to this island I am leading you; but first we must find your sister, for on her presence hangs the life of the white fox—if, indeed, he is not dead already.'

'The white fox!' exclaimed the prince. 'What do you know of him?'

'Not much,' answered the queen; 'but, since I arrived on the island, he was always with us, and charmed us all. Yesterday we missed him, but in the evening a little boat drifted up on the sands, and in it lay the fox, covered with blood. While his wounds were being tended in the palace with all the care imaginable, I set out to consult a wizard, who told me that I must enter the skiff and seek for the prince and princess of Lombardy, and that if, in twenty-four hours, I could bring them into the presence of the fox, his life would be saved. On a rock along the beach I found your father with an arrow through his shoulder, from the bow of his cousin the mad archduke, who was drawing another from his quiver, destined for me, when I fled into the forest!'

'My father so near!' cried the prince. 'We must return and seek him, and also look for my sister.'

They found her in the grotto, with her father's head in her lap, trying vainly to staunch his wounds. Between them they contrived to carry him to the boat, which sailed swiftly towards the island. On the way the prince gently broke to his sister the sad state of the white fox.

'Take me to him!' she said, as soon as the boat touched the island; and in silence the queen went down the path to the palace.

The white fox was lying on a soft mattress in front of a fire, his eyes closed, and a look on his face which told that death was not far distant. But he knew, somehow, that the princess was near him, and opened his eyes and wagged his tail feebly. The princess burst into sobs and tears, till a hand on her shoulder checked her.

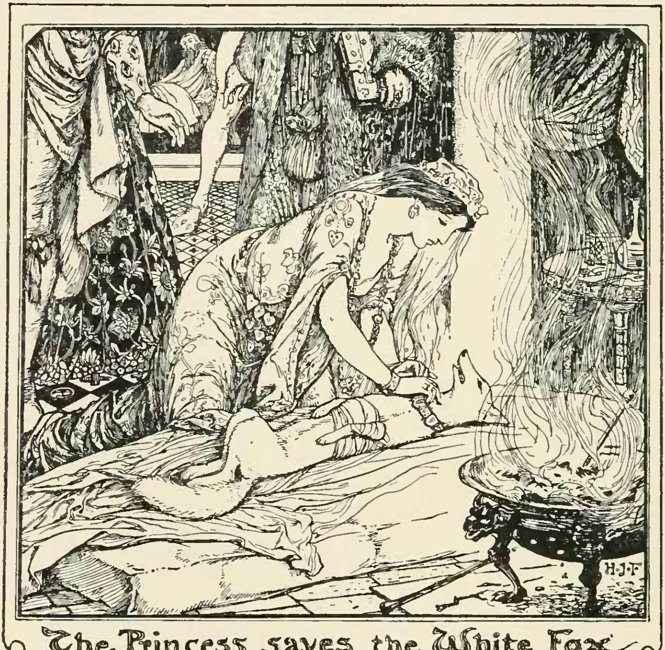
'Why do you waste the few moments that are left you in this manner?' asked the governor of the island sternly. 'Place the collar you wear round his neck, and he will be cured at once. But you must act quickly.'

The princess seemed turned to stone as she listened.

'The collar!' she gasped. 'But I have not got it, I lost it in the forest!' And the thousand sheaths with which the walls were hung took up the cry:

'The collar is lost! The collar is lost!'

'What collar are you talking about?' asked the king, who was lying on another bed, with the physicians bending over him. 'Here is one that I picked up among some cinders, before that madman shot me—perhaps it may be the one you want, or, at all events, it may do as well.' And he signed to an attendant to take the collar from the pocket of his velvet jerkin.



The Princess saves the White Fox

The princess leapt forward with joy at the sight of the precious thing, and snatching it from the hand of the man she placed it round the neck of the fox. All present held their breath as they watched what was happening; and what *did* happen was that his legs grew longer and longer, and his nose grew shorter and shorter. The fox was gone, and in his stead there lay Perarthrites, in a coat of thick white fur.

But though the prince of Lombardy was rejoiced to see his friend and cousin again, his heart still bled for the beautiful lady who had vanished so mysteriously. His face was so troubled that the governor of the island marked it, and asked what was the matter. 'Oh! help me, if you can,' cried the prince. 'The thought of the sufferings that the enchanted nymph may be undergoing tortures me!'

'They are far worse than you can imagine,' gravely replied the governor; 'but if you still possess your comb, you may yet relieve her of them. Ah! that is well,' he continued, as the prince quickly drew the comb from its case. 'Now follow me.'

Not only the prince, but every one else followed; and the governor led them down a long gallery to a heavy iron door, which flew open at its own accord. But what a sight met the prince's eyes! The lady whom he had last beheld in peerless beauty was sitting in a chair wrapped in flames, which were twisting like hair about her head. Her face was swollen and red; her mouth was open as if gasping for breath. Only her arms and neck were as lovely as ever in their whiteness.

'This is your doing,' said the governor to the prince; 'you brought her to this when you burnt the crocodile's skin. Now try if, by combing, you can soothe her agony.'

At the first touch of the comb the flames became suddenly extinguished; at the second, the look of pain vanished from the face, and it shrank into its usual size; at the third, she rose from the chair, lovelier than she ever was before, and flung herself into the arms of her brother Perarthrites.

After this there was nothing more to be done but to marry the two couples as fast as possible. And when the wedding was over, Perarthrites and his bride returned to Placenza, and Ferrandina and her husband to Lombardy, and they all lived happily till they died.

[From Count Anthony Hamilton's *Fairy Tales*.]

THE THANKSGIVING OF THE WAZIR

Once upon a time there lived in Hindustan two kings whose countries bordered upon each other; but, as they were rivals in wealth and power, and one was a Hindu rajah and the other a Mohammedan bâdshah, they were not good friends at all. In order, however, to escape continual quarrels, the rajah and the bâdshah had drawn up an agreement, stamped and signed, declaring that if any of their subjects, from the least to the greatest, crossed the boundary between the two kingdoms, he might be seized and punished.

One morning the bâdshah and his chief wazir, or prime minister, were just about to begin their morning's work over the affairs of the kingdom, and the bâdshah had taken up a pen and was cutting it to his liking with a sharp knife, when the knife slipped and cut off the tip of his finger.

'Oh-he, wazir!' cried the king, 'I've cut the tip of my finger off!'

'That is good hearing!' said the wazir in answer.

'Insolent one,' exclaimed the king. 'Do you take pleasure in the misfortunes of others, and in mine also? Take him away, my guards, and put him in the court prison until I have time to punish him as he deserves!'

Instantly the officers in attendance seized upon the luckless wazir, and dragged him out of the king's presence towards the narrow doorway, through which unhappy criminals were wont to be led to prison or execution.

As the door opened to receive him, the wazir muttered something into his great white beard which the soldiers could not hear.

'What said the rascal?' shouted the angry king.

He says, 'he thanks your majesty,' replied one of the gaolers. And at his words, the king stared at the closing door, in anger and amazement.

'He must be mad,' he cried, 'for he is grateful, not only for the misfortunes of others, but for his own; surely something has turned his head!'

Now the king was very fond of his old wazir, and although the court physician came and bound up his injured finger with cool and healing ointment, and soothed the pain, he could not soothe the soreness of the king's heart, nor could any of all his ministers and courtiers, who found his majesty very cross all the day long.

Early next morning the king ordered his horse and declared that he would go hunting. Instantly all was bustle and preparation in stable and hall, and by the time he was ready a score of ministers and huntsmen stood ready to mount and accompany him; but to their astonishment the king would have none of them. Indeed, he glared at them so fiercely that they were glad to leave him. So away and away he wandered, over field and through forest, so moody and thoughtful that many a fat buck and gaudy pheasant escaped without notice, and so careless was he whither he was going that he strayed without perceiving it over into the rajah's territory, and only discovered the fact when, suddenly, men stepped from all sides out of a thicket, and there was nothing left but surrender. Then the poor bâdshah was seized and bound and taken to the rajah's prison, thinking most of the time of his wazir, who was suffering a similar fate, and wishing that, like the wazir, he could feel that there was something to give thanks for.

That night the rajah held a special council to consider what should be done to his rival who had thus given himself into his hands. All the Brahmans were sent for —fat priests who understood all about everything, and what days were lucky and what unlucky—and, whilst all the rest of the rajah's councillors were offering him different advice until he was nearly crazy with anger and indecision, the chief Brahman was squatting in a corner figuring out sums and signs to himself with an admiring group of lesser priests around him. At last he arose, and advanced towards the throne.

'Well,' said the rajah anxiously, 'what have you to advise?'

'A very unlucky day!' exclaimed the chief Brahman. 'Oh, a very unlucky day! The god Devi is full of wrath, and commands that to-morrow you must chop off this bâdshah's head and offer it in to him in sacrifice.'

'Ah, well,' said the rajah, 'let it be done. I leave it to you to carry out the sentence.' And he bowed to the priests and left the room.

Before dawn great preparations were being made for a grand festival in honour of the great idol Devi. Hundreds of banners waved, hundreds of drummers drummed, hundreds of singers chanted chants, hundreds of priests, well washed and anointed, performed their sacred rites, whilst the rajah sat, nervous and ill at ease, amongst hundreds of courtiers and servants, wishing it were all well over. At last the time came for the sacrifice to be offered, and the poor bâdshah was led out bound, to have his head chopped off.

The chief Brahman came along with a smile on his face, and a big sword in his hand, when, suddenly, he noticed that the bâdshah's finger was tied up in a bit of rag. Instantly he dropped the sword, and, with his eyes starting out of his head with excitement, pounced upon the rag and tore it off, and there he saw that the tip of his victim's finger was missing. At this he got very red and angry indeed, and he led the bâdshah up to where the rajah sat wondering.

'Behold! O rajah,' he said, 'this sacrifice is useless, the tip of his finger is gone! A sacrifice is no sacrifice unless it is complete.' And he began to weep with rage and mortification.

But instead of wailing likewise, the rajah gave a sigh of relief, and answered: 'Well, that settles the matter. If it had been anyone else I should not have minded; but, somehow—a king and all—well, it doesn't seem quite right to sacrifice a king.' And with that he jumped up and with his jewelled dagger cut the bâdshah's cords, and marched with him out of the temple back to the palace.

After having bathed and refreshed his guest, the rajah loaded him with gifts, and himself accompanied him with a large escort as far as the frontier between their kingdoms, where, amidst salutes and great rejoicings, they tore up the old agreement and drew up another in which each king promised welcome and safe conduct to any of the other's people, from the least to the greatest, who came over the border on any errand whatever. And so they embraced, and each went his own way.

When the bâdshah got home that very evening he sent for his imprisoned wazir.

'Well, O wazir!' he said, when the old man had been brought before him, 'what think you has been happening to me?'

'How can a man in prison know what is happening outside it?' answered the wazir.

Then the bâdshah told him all his adventures. And when he had reached the end he added:

'I have made up my mind, as a token of gratitude for my escape, to pardon you freely, if you will tell me why you gave thanks when I cut off the tip of my finger.'

'Sire,' replied the old wazir, 'am I not right in thinking that it was a very lucky thing for you that you *did* cut off the tip of your finger, for otherwise you would certainly have lost your head. And to lose a scrap of one's finger is surely the least of the two evils.'

'Very true,' answered the king, touching his head as he spoke, as if to make quite certain that it was still there, 'but yet—why did you likewise give thanks when I put you into prison?'

'I gave thanks,' said the wazir, 'because it is good always to give thanks. And had I known that my being in prison was to prevent the god Devi claiming me instead of your majesty, as a perfect offering, I should have given greater thanks still.'

[Punjâbi story.]

SAMBA THE COWARD

In the great country far away south, through which flows the river Nile, there lived a king who had an only child called Samba.

Now, from the time that Samba could walk he showed signs of being afraid of everything, and as he grew bigger he became more and more frightened. At first his father's friends made light of it, and said to each other:

'It is strange to see a boy of our race running into a hut at the trumpeting of an elephant, and trembling with fear if a lion cub half his size comes near him; but, after all, he is only a baby, and when he is older he will be as brave as the rest.'

'Yes, he is only a baby,' answered the king who overheard them, 'it will be all right by-and-by.' But, somehow, he sighed as he said it, and the men looked at him and made no reply.

The years passed away, and Samba had become a tall and strong youth. He was good-natured and pleasant, and was liked by all, and if during his father's hunting parties he was seldom to be seen in any place of danger, he was too great a favourite for much to be said.

'When the king holds the feast and declares him to be his heir, he will cease to be a child,' murmured the rest of the people, as they had done before; and on the day of the ceremony their hearts beat gladly, and they cried to each other:

'It is Samba, Samba, whose chin is above the heads of other men, who will defend us against the tribes of the robbers!'

Not many weeks after, the dwellers in the village awoke to find that during the night their herds had been driven away, and their herdsmen carried off into slavery by their enemies. Now was the time for Samba to show the brave spirit that had come to him with his manhood, and to ride forth at the head of the warriors of his race. But Samba could nowhere be found, and a party of the avengers went on their way without him.

It was many days later before he came back, with his head held high, and a tale of a lion which he had tracked to its lair and killed, at the risk of his own life. A little while earlier and his people would have welcomed his story, and believed it all, but now it was too late.

'Samba the Coward,' cried a voice from the crowd; and the name stuck to him, even the very children shouted it at him, and his father did not spare him. At length he could bear it no longer, and made up his mind to leave his own land for another where peace had reigned since the memory of man. So, early next morning, he slipped out to the king's stables, and choosing the quietest horse he could find, he rode away northwards.

Never as long as he lived did Samba forget the terrors of that journey. He could hardly sleep at night for dread of the wild beasts that might be lurking behind every rock or bush, while, by day, the distant roar of a lion would cause him to start so violently, that he almost fell from his horse. A dozen times he was on the point of turning back, and it was not the terror of the mocking words and scornful laughs that kept him from doing so, but the terror lest he should be forced to take part in their wars. Therefore he held on, and deeply thankful he felt when the walls of a city, larger than he had ever dreamed of, rose before him.

Drawing himself up to his full height, he rode proudly through the gate and past the palace, where, as was her custom, the princess was sitting on the terrace roof, watching the bustle in the street below.

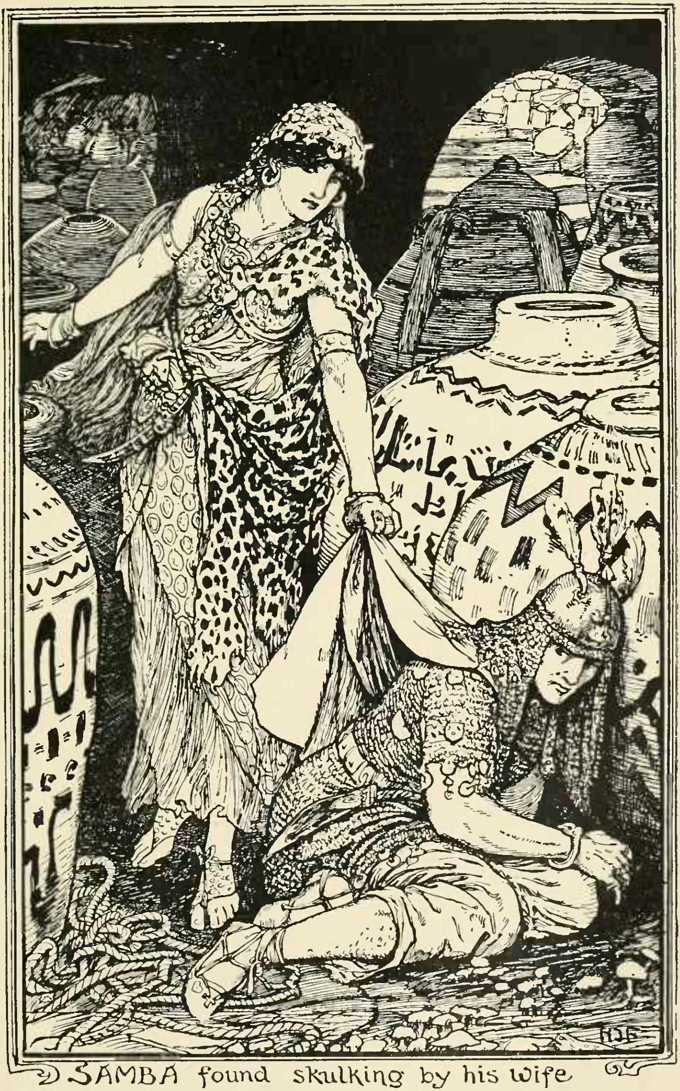
'That is a gallant figure,' thought she, as Samba, mounted on his big black horse, steered his way skilfully among the crowds; and, beckoning to a slave, she ordered him to go and meet the stranger, and ask him who he was and whence he came.

'Oh, princess, he is the son of a king, and heir to a country which lies near the Great River,' answered the slave, when he had returned from questioning Samba. And the princess on hearing this news summoned her father, and told him that if she was not allowed to wed the stranger she would die unmarried.

Like many other fathers, the king could refuse his daughter nothing, and besides, she had rejected so many suitors already that he was quite alarmed lest no man should be good enough for her. Therefore, after a talk with Samba, who charmed him by his good humour and pleasant ways, he gave his consent, and three days later the wedding feast was celebrated with the utmost splendour.

The princess was very proud of her tall handsome husband, and for some time she was quite content that he should pass the days with her under the palm trees, telling her the stories that she loved, or amusing her with tales of the manners and customs of his country, which were so different to those of her own. But, by-and-by, this was not enough; she wanted other people to be proud of him too, and one day she said:

'I really almost wish that those Moorish thieves from the north would come on one of their robbing expeditions. I should love so to see you ride out at the head of our men, to chase them home again. Ah, how happy I should be when the city rang with your noble deeds!'



SAMBA found skulking by his wife

She looked lovingly at him as she spoke; but, to her surprise, his face grew dark, and he answered hastily:

'Never speak to me again of the Moors or of war. It was to escape from them that I fled from my own land, and at the first word of invasion I should leave you for ever.'

'How funny you are,' cried she, breaking into a laugh. 'The idea of anyone as big as you being afraid of a Moor! But still, you mustn't say those things to anyone except me, or they might think you were in earnest.'

Not very long after this, when the people of the city were holding a great feast outside the walls of the town, a body of Moors, who had been in hiding for days, drove off all the sheep and goats which were peacefully feeding on the slopes of a hill. Directly the loss was discovered, which was not for some hours, the king gave orders that the war drum should be beaten, and the warriors assembled in the great square before the palace, trembling with fury at the insult which had been put upon them. Loud were the cries for instant vengeance, and for Samba, son-in-law of the king, to lead them to battle. But shout as they might, Samba never came.

And where was he? No further than in a cool, dark cellar of the palace, crouching among huge earthenware pots of grain. With a rush of pain at her heart, there his wife found him, and she tried with all her strength to kindle in him a sense of shame, but in vain. Even the thought of the future danger he might run from the contempt of his subjects was as nothing when compared with the risks of the present.

'Take off your tunic of mail,' said the princess at last; and her voice was so stern and cold that none would have known it. 'Give it to me, and hand me besides your helmet, your sword and your spear.' And with many fearful glances to right and to left, Samba stripped off the armour inlaid with gold, the property of the king's son-in-law. Silently his wife took, one by one, the pieces from him, and fastened them on her with firm hands, never even glancing at the tall form of her husband who had slunk back to his corner. When she had fastened the last buckle, and lowered her vizor, she went out, and mounting Samba's horse, gave the signal to the warriors to follow.

Now, although the princess was much shorter than her husband, she was a tall woman, and the horse which she rode was likewise higher than the rest, so that when the men caught sight of the gold-inlaid suit of chain armour, they did not doubt that Samba was taking his rightful place, and cheered him loudly. The princess bowed in answer to their greeting, but kept her vizor down; and touching her horse with the spur, she galloped at the head of her troops to charge the enemy. The Moors, who had not expected to be so quickly pursued, had scarcely time to form themselves into battle array, and were speedily put to flight. Then the little troop of horsemen returned to the city, where all sung the praises of Samba their leader.

The instant they reached the palace the princess flung her reins to a groom, and disappeared up a side staircase, by which she could, unseen, enter her own rooms. Here she found Samba lying idly on a heap of mats; but he raised his head uneasily as the door opened and looked at his wife, not feeling sure how she might act towards him. However, he need not have been afraid of harsh words: she merely unbuttoned her armour as fast as possible, and bade him put it on with all speed. Samba obeyed, not daring to ask any questions; and when he had finished the princess told him to follow her, and led him on to the flat roof of the house, below which a crowd had gathered, cheering lustily.

'Samba, the king's son-in-law! Samba, the bravest of the brave! Where is he? Let him show himself!' And when Samba did show himself the shouts and applause became louder than ever. 'See how modest he is! He leaves the glory to others!' cried they. And Samba only smiled and waved his hand, and said nothing.

Out of all the mass of people assembled there to do honour to Samba, one alone there was who did not shout and praise with the rest. This was the princess's youngest brother, whose sharp eyes had noted certain things during the fight which recalled his sister much more than they did her husband. Under promise of secrecy, he told his suspicions to the other princes, but only got laughed at, and was bidden to carry his dreams elsewhere.

'Well, well,' answered the boy, 'we shall see who is right; but the next time we give battle to the Moors I will take care to place a private mark on our commander.'

In spite of their defeat, not many days after the Moors sent a fresh body of troops to steal some cattle, and again Samba's wife dressed herself in her husband's armour, and rode out at the head of the avenging column. This time the combat was fiercer than before, and in the thick of it her youngest brother drew near, and gave his sister a slight wound on the leg. At the moment she paid no heed to the pain, which, indeed, she scarcely felt; but when the enemy had been put to flight and the little band returned to the palace, faintness suddenly overtook her, and she could hardly stagger up the staircase to her own apartments.

'I am wounded,' she cried, sinking down on the mats where he had been lying, 'but do not be anxious; it is really nothing. You have only got to wound yourself slightly in the same spot and no one will guess that it was I and not you who were fighting.'

'What!' cried Samba, his eyes nearly starting from his head in surprise and terror. 'Can you possibly imagine that I should agree to anything so useless and painful? Why, I might as well have gone to fight myself!'

'Ah, I ought to have known better, indeed,' answered the princess, in a voice that seemed to come from a long way off; but, quick as thought, the moment Samba turned his back she pierced one of his bare legs with a spear.

He gave a loud scream and staggered backwards, from astonishment, much more than from pain. But before he could speak his wife had left the room and had gone to seek the medicine man of the palace.

'My husband has been wounded,' said she, when she had found him, 'come and tend him with speed, for he is faint from loss of blood.' And she took care that more than one person heard her words, so that all that day the people pressed up to the gate of the palace, asking for news of their brave champion.

'You see,' observed the king's eldest sons, who had visited the room where Samba lay groaning, 'you see, O, wise young brother, that we were right and you were wrong about Samba, and that he really *did* go into the battle.' But the boy answered nothing, and only shook his head doubtfully.

It was only two days later that the Moors appeared for the third time, and though the herds had been tethered in a new and safer place, they were promptly carried off as before. 'For,' said the Moors to each other, 'the tribe will never think of our coming back so soon when they have beaten us so badly.'

When the drum sounded to assemble all the fighting men, the princess rose and sought her husband.

'Samba,' cried she, 'my wound is worse than I thought. I can scarcely walk, and could not mount my horse without help. For to-day, then, I cannot do your work, so you must go instead of me.'

'What nonsense,' exclaimed Samba, 'I never heard of such a thing. Why, I might be wounded, or even killed! You have three brothers. The king can choose one of them.'

'They are all too young,' replied his wife; 'the men would not obey them. But if, indeed, you will not go, at least you can help me to harness my horse.' And to this Samba, who was always ready to do anything he was asked when there was no danger about it, agreed readily.

So the horse was quickly harnessed, and when it was done the princess said:

Now ride the horse to the place of meeting outside the gates, and I will join you by a shorter way, and will change places with you.' Samba, who loved riding in times of peace, mounted as she had told him, and when he was safe in the saddle, his wife dealt the horse a sharp cut with her whip, and he dashed off through the town and through the ranks of the warriors who were waiting for him. Instantly the whole place was in motion. Samba tried to check his steed, but he might as well have sought to stop the wind, and it seemed no more than a few minutes before they were grappling hand to hand with the Moors.

Then a miracle happened. Samba the coward, the skulker, the terrified, no sooner found himself pressed hard, unable to escape, than something sprang into life within him, and he fought with all his might. And when a man of his size and strength begins to fight he generally fights well.

That day the victory was really owing to Samba, and the shouts of the people were louder than ever. When he returned, bearing with him the sword of the Moorish chief, the old king pressed him in his arms and said:

'Oh, my son, how can I ever show you how grateful I am for this splendid service.'

But Samba, who was good and loyal when fear did not possess him, answered straightly:

'My father, it is to your daughter and not to me to whom thanks are due, for it is she who has turned the coward that I was into a brave man.'

[*Contes Soudainais.* Par C. Monteil.]

KUPTI AND IMANI

Once there was a king who had two daughters; and their names were Kupti and Imani. He loved them both very much, and spent hours in talking to them, and one day he said to Kupti, the elder:

'Are you satisfied to leave your life and fortune in my hands?'

'Verily yes,' answered the princess, surprised at the question. 'In whose hands should I leave them, if not in yours?'

But when he asked his younger daughter Imani the same question, she replied:

'No, indeed! If I had the chance I would make my own fortune.'

At this answer the king was very displeased, and said:

'You are too young to know the meaning of your words. But, be it so; I will give you the chance of gratifying your wish.'

Then he sent for an old lame fakir who lived in a tumbledown hut on the outskirts of the city, and when he had presented himself, the king said:

'No doubt as you are very old and nearly crippled, you would be glad of some young person to live with you and serve you; so I will send you my younger daughter. She wants to earn her living, and she can do so with you.'

Of course the old fakir had not a word to say, or, if he had, he was really too astonished and troubled to say it; but the young princess went off with him smiling, and tripped along quite gaily, whilst he hobbled home with her in perplexed silence.

Directly they got to the hut the fakir began to think what he could arrange for the princess's comfort; but after all he was a fakir, and his house was bare except for one bedstead, two old cooking pots and an earthen jar for water, and one cannot get much comfort out of those things. However, the princess soon ended his perplexity by asking:

'Have you any money?'

'I have a penny somewhere,' replied the fakir.

'Very well,' rejoined the princess, 'give me the penny and go out and borrow me a spinning-wheel and a loom.'

After much seeking the fakir found the penny and started on his errand, whilst the princess went off shopping. First she bought a farthing's worth of oil, and then she bought three farthings' worth of flax. When she got back with her purchases she set the old man on the bedstead and rubbed his crippled leg with the oil for an hour. Then she sat down to the spinning-wheel and spun and spun all night long whilst the old man slept, until, in the morning, she had spun the finest thread that ever was seen. Next she went to the loom and wove and wove until by the evening she had woven a beautiful silver cloth.

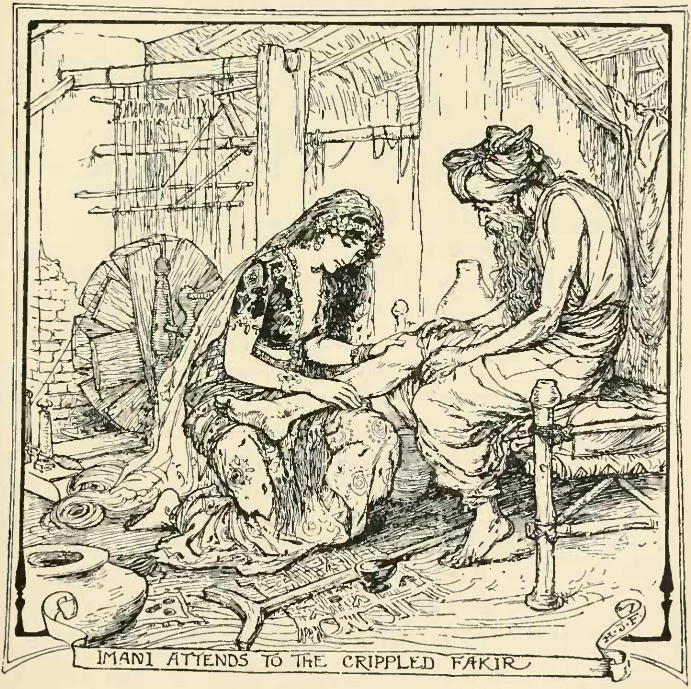
'Now,' said she to the fakir, 'go into the market-place and sell my cloth whilst I rest.'

'And what am I to ask for it?' said the old man.

'Two gold pieces,' replied the princess.

So the fakir hobbled away, and stood in the market-place to sell the cloth. Presently the elder princess drove by, and when she saw the cloth she stopped and asked the price.

'Two gold pieces,' said the fakir. And the princess gladly paid them, after which the old fakir hobbled home with the money. As she had done before so Imani did again day after day. Always she spent a penny upon oil and flax, always she tended the old man's lame limb, and spun and wove the most beautiful cloths and sold them at high prices. Gradually the city became famous for her beautiful stuffs, the old fakir's lame leg became straighter and stronger, and the hole under the floor of the hut where they kept their money became fuller and fuller of gold pieces. At last, one day, the princess said:



IMANI ATTENDS TO THE CRIPPLED FAKIR

'I really think we have got enough to live in greater comfort.' And she sent for builders, and they built a beautiful house for her and the old fakir, and in all the city there was none finer except the king's palace. Presently this reached the ears of the king, and when he inquired whose it was they told him that it belonged to his daughter.

'Well,' exclaimed the king, 'she said that she would make her own fortune, and somehow or other she seems to have done it!'

A little while after this, business took the king to another country, and before he went he asked his elder daughter what she would like him to bring her back as a gift.

'A necklace of rubies,' answered she. And then the king thought he would like to ask Imani too; so he sent a messenger to find out what sort of a present she wanted. The man happened to arrive just as she was trying to disentangle a knot in her loom, and bowing low before her, he said:

'The king sends me to inquire what you wish him to bring you as a present from the country of Dûr?' But Imani, who was only considering how she could best untie the knot without breaking the thread, replied:

'Patience!' meaning that the messenger should wait till she was able to attend to him. But the messenger went off with this as an answer, and told the king that the only thing the princess Imani wanted was 'patience.'

'Oh!' said the king, 'I don't know whether that's a thing to be bought at Dûr; I never had it myself, but if it is to be got I will buy it for her.'

Next day the king departed on his journey, and when his business at Dûr was completed he bought for Kupti a beautiful ruby necklace. Then he said to a servant:

'The princess Imani wants some patience. I did not know there was such a thing, but you must go to the market and inquire, and if any is to be sold, get it and bring it to me.'

The servant saluted and left the king's presence. He walked about the market for some time crying: 'Has anyone patience to sell? patience to sell?' And some of the people mocked, and some (who had no patience) told him to go away and not be a fool; and some said: 'The fellow's mad! As though one could buy or sell patience!'

At length it came to the ears of the king of Dûr that there was a madman in the market trying to buy patience. And the king laughed and said:

'I should like to see that fellow, bring him here!'

And immediately his attendants went to seek the man, and brought him to the king, who asked:

'What is this you want?'

And the man replied: 'Sire! I am bidden to ask for patience.'

'Oh,' said the king, 'you must have a strange master! What does he want with it?'

'My master wants it as a present for his daughter Imani,' replied the servant.

'Well,' said the king, 'I know of some patience which the young lady might have if she cares for it; but it is not to be bought.'

Now the king's name was Subbar Khan, and Subbar *means* 'patience'; but the messenger did not know that, or understand that he was making a joke. However, he declared that the princess Imani was not only young and beautiful, but also the cleverest, most industrious, and kindest-hearted of princesses; and he would have gone on explaining her virtues had not the king laughingly put up his hand and stopped him saying:

'Well, well, wait a minute, and I will see what can be done.'

With that he got up and went to his own apartments and took out a little casket. Into the casket he put a fan, and shutting it up carefully he brought it to the messenger and said:

'Here is a casket. It has no lock nor key, and yet will open only to the touch of the person who needs its contents—and whoever opens it will obtain patience; but I can't tell whether it will be quite the kind of patience that is wanted.' And the servant bowed low, and took the casket; but when he asked what was to be paid, the king would take nothing. So he went away and gave the casket and an account of his adventures to his master.

As soon as their father got back to his country Kupti and Imani each got the presents he had brought for them. Imani was very surprised when the casket was brought to her by the hand of a messenger.

'But,' she said, 'what is this? I never asked for anything! Indeed I had no time, for the messenger ran away before I had unravelled my tangle.'

But the servant declared that the casket was for her, so she took it with some curiosity, and brought it to the old fakir. The old man tried to open it, but in vain—so closely did the lid fit that it seemed to be quite immovable, and yet there was no lock, nor bolt, nor spring, nor anything apparently by which the casket was kept shut. When he was tired of trying he handed the casket to the princess, who hardly touched it before it opened quite easily, and there lay within a beautiful fan. With a cry of surprise and pleasure Imani took out the fan, and began to fan herself.

Hardly had she finished three strokes of the fan before there suddenly appeared from nowhere in particular, king Subbar Khan of Dûr! The princess gasped and rubbed her eyes, and the old fakir sat and gazed in such astonishment that for some minutes he could not speak. At length he said:

'Who may you be, fair sir, if you please?'

'My name,' said the king, 'is Subbar Khan of Dûr. This lady,' bowing to the princess, 'has summoned me, and here I am!'

'I?'—stammered the princess—'I have summoned you? I never saw or heard of you in my life before, so how could that be?'

Then the king told them how he had heard of a man in his own city of Dûr trying to buy patience, and how he had given him the fan in the casket.

'Both are magical,' he added; 'when anyone uses the fan, in three strokes of it I am with them; if they fold it and tap it on the table, in three taps I am at home again. The casket will not open to all, but you see it was this fair lady who asked for patience, and, as that is my name, here I am, very much at her service.'

Now the princess Imani, being of a high spirit, was anxious to fold up the fan, and give the three taps which would send the king home again; but the old fakir was very pleased with his guest, and so in one way and another they spent quite a pleasant evening together before Subbar Khan took his leave.

After that he was often summoned; and as both the fakir and he were very fond of chess and were good players, they used to sit up half the night playing, and at last a little room in the house began to be called the king's room, and whenever he stayed late he used to sleep there and go home again in the morning.

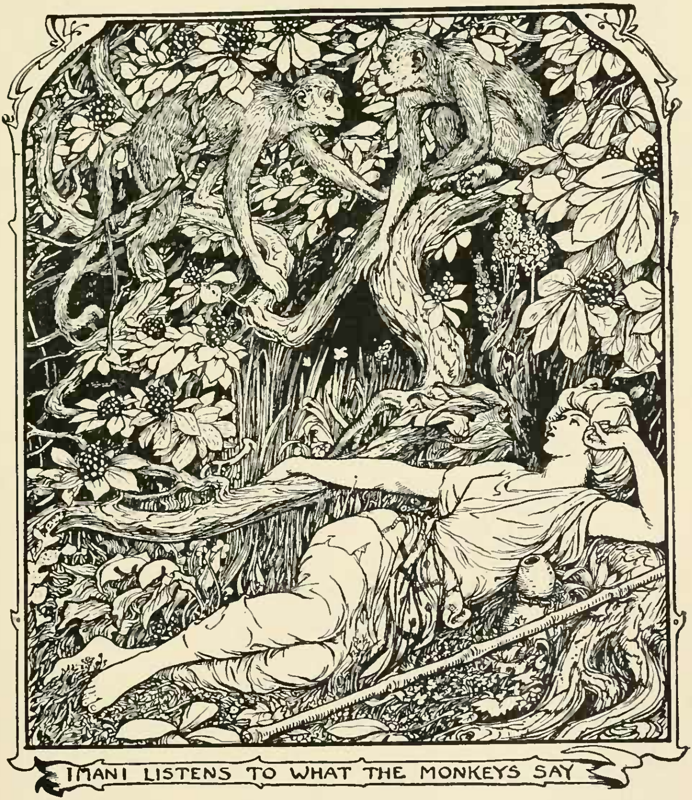
By-and-by it came to the ears of the princess Kupti that there was a rich and handsome young man visiting at her sister's house, and she was very jealous. So she went one day to pay Imani a visit, and pretended to be very affectionate, and interested in the house, and in the way in which Imani and the old fakir lived, and of their mysterious and royal visitor. As the sisters went from place to place, Kupti was shown Subbar Khan's room; and presently, making some excuse, she slipped in there by herself and swiftly spread under the sheet which lay upon the bed a quantity of very finely powdered and splintered glass which was poisoned, and which she had brought with her concealed in her clothes. Shortly afterwards she took leave of her sister, declaring that she could never forgive herself for not having come near her all this time, and that she would now begin to make amends for her neglect.

That very evening Subbar Khan came and sat up late with the old fakir playing chess as usual. Very tired, he at length bade him and the princess good-night and, as soon as he lay down on the bed, thousands of tiny, tiny splinters of poisoned glass ran into him. He could not think what was the matter, and started this way and that until he was pricked all over, and he felt as though he were burning from head to foot. But he never said a word, only he sat up all night in agony of body and in worse agony of mind to think that he should have been poisoned, as he guessed he was, in Imani's own house. In the morning, although he was nearly fainting, he still said nothing, and by means of the magic fan was duly transported home again. Then he sent for all the physicians and doctors in his kingdom, but none could make out what his illness was ; and so he lingered on for weeks and weeks trying every remedy that anyone could devise, and passing sleepless nights and days of pain and fever and misery, until at last he was at the point of death.

Meanwhile the princess Imani and the old fakir were much troubled because, although they waved the magic fan again and again, no Subbar Khan appeared, and they feared that he had tired of them, or that some evil fate had overtaken him. At last the princess was in such a miserable state of doubt and uncertainty that she determined to go herself to the kingdom of Dûr and see what was the matter. Disguising herself in man's clothes as a young fakir, she set out upon her journey alone and on foot, as a fakir should travel. One evening she found herself in a forest, and lay down under a great tree to pass the night. But she could not sleep for thinking of Subbar Khan, and wondering what had happened to him.

Presently she heard two great monkeys talking to one another in the tree above her head.

'Good evening, brother,' said one, 'whence come you—and what is the news?'



IMANI LISTENS TO WHAT THE MONKEYS SAY

'I come from Dûr,' said the other, 'and the news is that the king is dying.'

'Oh,' said the first, 'I'm sorry to hear that, for he is a master hand at slaying leopards and creatures that ought not to be allowed to live. What is the matter with him?'

'No man knows,' replied the second monkey, 'but the birds, who see all and carry all messages, say that he is dying of poisoned glass that Kupti the king's daughter spread upon his bed.'

'Ah!' said the first monkey, 'that is sad news; but if they only knew it, the berries of the very tree we sit in, steeped in hot water, will cure such a disease as that in three days at most.'

'True!' said the other, 'it's a pity that we can't tell some man of a medicine so simple, and so save a good man's life. But men are so silly; they go and shut themselves up in stuffy houses in stuffy cities instead of living in nice airy trees, and so they miss knowing all the best things.'

Now when Imani heard that Subbar Khan was dying she began to weep silently; but as she listened she dried her tears and sat up; and as soon as daylight dawned over the forest she began to gather the berries from the tree until she had filled her cloth with a load of them. Then she walked on as fast as she could, and in two days reached the city of Dûr. The first thing she did was to pass through the market crying:

'Medicine for sale! Are any ill that need my medicine?' And presently one man said to his neighbour:

'See, there is a young fakir with medicine for sale, perhaps he could do something for the king.'

'Pooh!' replied the other, 'where so many greybeards have failed, how should a lad like that be of any use?'

'Still,' said the first, 'he might try.' And he went up and spoke to Imani, and together they set out for the palace and announced that another doctor was come to try and cure the king.

After some delay Imani was admitted to the sick room, and, whilst *she* was so well disguised that the king did not recognise her, *he* was so wasted by illness that she hardly knew *him*. But she began at once, full of hope, by asking for some apartments all to herself and a pot in which to boil water. As soon as the water was heated she steeped some of her berries in it and gave the mixture to the king's attendants and told them to wash his body with it. The first washing did so much good that the king slept quietly all the night. Again the second day she did the same, and this time the king declared he was hungry, and called for food. After the third day he was quite well, only very weak from his long illness. On the fourth day he got up and sat upon his throne, and then sent messengers to fetch the physician who had cured him. When Imani appeared everyone marvelled that so young a man should be so clever a doctor; and the king wanted to give him immense presents of money and of all kinds of precious things. At first Imani would take nothing, but at last she said that, if she must be rewarded, she would ask for the king's signet ring and his handkerchief. So, as she would take nothing more, the king gave her his signet ring and his handkerchief, and she departed and travelled back to her own country as fast as she could.

A little while after her return, when she had related to the fakir all her adventures, they sent for Subbar Khan by means of the magic fan; and when he appeared they asked him why he had stayed away for so long. Then he told them all about his illness, and how he had been cured, and when he had finished the princess rose up and, opening a cabinet, brought out the ring and handkerchief, and said, laughing:

'Are these the rewards you gave to your doctor?'

At that the king looked, and he recognised her, and understood in a moment all that had happened; and he jumped up and put the magic fan in his pocket, and declared that no one should send him away to his own country any more unless Imani would come with him and be his wife. And so it was settled, and the old fakir and Imani went to the city of Dûr, where Imani was married to the king and lived happily ever after.

[Punjâbi story.]

THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF LITTLE MAIA

ONCE upon a time there lived a woman who had a pretty cottage and garden right in the middle of a forest. All through the summer she was quite happy tending her flowers and listening to the birds singing in the trees, but in the winter, when snow lay on the ground and wolves came howling about the door, she felt very lonely and frightened. 'If I only had a child to speak to, however small, what a comfort it would be!' she said to herself. And the heavier the snow fell the oftener she repeated the words. And at last a day arrived when she could bear the silence and solitude no longer, and set off to walk to the nearest village to beg someone to sell her or lend her a child.

The snow was very deep, and reached above her ankles, and it took her almost an hour to go a few hundred yards.

'It will be dark at this rate before I get to the first house,' thought she, and stopped to look about her. Suddenly a little woman in a high-crowned hat stepped from behind a tree in front of her.

'This is a bad day for walking! Are you going far?' inquired the little woman.

'Well, I want to go to the village; but I don't see how I am ever to get there,' answered the other.

'And may I ask what important business takes you there?' asked the little woman, who was really a witch.

'My house is so dreary, with no one to speak to; I cannot stay in it alone, and I am seeking for a child—I don't mind how small she is—who will keep me company.'

'Oh, if that is all, you need go no further,' replied the witch, putting her hand in her pocket. 'Look, here is a barley corn, as a favour you shall have it for twelve shillings, and if you plant it in a flower-pot, and give it plenty of water, in a few days you will see something wonderful.'

This promise raised the woman's spirits. She gladly paid down the price, and as soon as she returned home she dug a hole in a flower-pot and put in the seed.

For three days she waited, hardly taking her eyes from the flower-pot in its warm corner, and on the third morning she saw that, while she was asleep, a tall red tulip had shot up, sheathed in green leaves.

'What a beautiful blossom,' cried the woman, stooping to kiss it, when, as she did so, the red petals burst asunder, and in the midst of them was a lovely little girl only an inch high. This tiny little creature was seated on a mattress of violets, and covered with a quilt of rose leaves, and she opened her eyes and smiled at the woman as if she had known her all her life.

'Oh! you darling; I shall never be lonely any more!' she exclaimed in rapture; and the baby nodded her head as much as to say:

'No, of course you won't!'

The woman lost no time in seeking for a roomy walnut-shell, which she lined thickly with white satin, and on it she placed the mattress, with the child, whom she called Maia, upon it. This was her bed, and stood on a chair close to where her foster-mother was sleeping; but in the morning she was lifted out, and placed on a leaf in the middle of a large bowl of water, and given two white horse-hairs to row herself about with. She was the happiest baby that ever was seen, and passed the whole day singing to herself, in a language of her own, that nobody else could understand.

For some weeks the two lived together and never grew tired of each other's society, and then a terrible misfortune happened. One night, when the foster-mother lay sound asleep after a hard day's work, a big, ugly, wet frog hopped in through the open window and stood staring at Maia under her quilt of rose leaves.

'Dear me! that is quite a pretty little girl,' thought the frog to herself; 'she would make a nice wife for my son.' And picking up the walnut cradle in her mouth, she hopped with it to the edge of a stream which ran through the garden.

'Come and see what I have brought you,' called the old frog, when she reached her home in the mud.

'Croak! croak! croak!' uttered the son, gazing with pleasure at the sleeping child.

'Hush; don't make such a noise or you will wake her!' whispered the mother. 'I mean her to be a wife for you, and while we are preparing for the wedding we will set her on that water-lily leaf in the middle of the brook, so that she may not be able to run away from us.'

It was on this green floating prison that Maia awoke, frightened and puzzled, with the first rays of the sun. She stood up straight on the leaf, looking about her for a way of escape, and, finding none, she sat down again and began to weep bitterly. At length her sobs were heard by the old frog, who was busy in her house at the bottom of the marsh, twisting rushes into a soft carpet for Maia's feet, and twining reeds and grapes over the doorway, to make it look pretty for the bride.

'Ah! the poor child feels lost and unhappy,' she thought pitifully, for her heart was kind. 'Well, I have just done, and then my son and I will go to fetch her. When she sees how handsome he is she will be all smiles again.' And in a few minutes they both appeared beside the leaf.

'This is your future husband. Did you ever see anyone like him?' asked the proud mother, pushing him forward. But, after one glance, Maia only cried the more; and the little fishes who lived in the stream came swimming round to see what was the matter.

'It is absurd that such a pretty creature should be forced to take a husband whom she does not want,' said they to each other. 'And such an ugly one too! However, we can easily prevent it.' And by turns they gnawed the stem of the lily-leaf close to the root, till at length it was free, and taking it in their mouths they bore Maia far away, till the little stream grew into a great river.

Oh, how Maia enjoyed that voyage, when once she became quite certain that the frogs could no longer reach her. Past many towns she went, and the people on the banks all turned to look at her, and exclaimed:

'What a lovely little girl! Where can she have come from?'

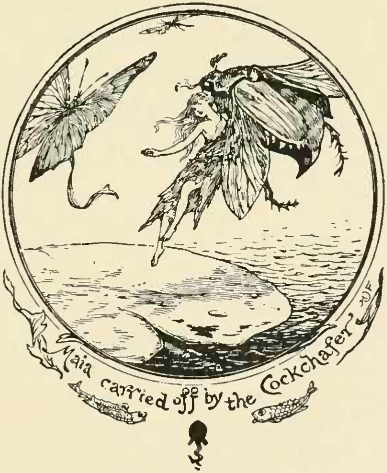
'What a lovely little girl!' twittered the birds in the bushes. And a blue butterfly fell in love with her, and would not leave her; so she took off her sash, which just matched him, and tied it round his body, so that with this new kind of horse she travelled much faster than before.

Unluckily, a great cockchafer, who was buzzing over the river, happened to catch sight of her, and caught her up in his claws. The poor butterfly was terribly frightened at the sight of him, and he struggled hard to free himself, so that the sash bow gave way, and he flew off into the sunshine. But Maia wasn't so fortunate, and though the cockchafer collected honey from the flowers for her dinner, and told her several times how pretty she was, she could not feel at ease with him. The cockchafer noticed this, and summoned his sisters to play with her; but they only stared rudely, and said:

'Where did you pick up that strange object? She is very ugly to be sure, but one ought to pity her for she has only two legs.'

'Yes, and no feelers,' added another; 'and she is so thin! Well, our brother has certainly very odd taste!'

'Indeed he has!' echoed the others. And they repeated it so loud and so often that, in the end, he believed it too, and snatching her up from the tree where he had placed her, set her down upon a daisy which grew near the ground.


Maia carried off by the Cockchafer

Here Maia stayed for the whole summer, and really was not at all unhappy. She ventured to walk about by herself, and wove herself a bed of some blades of grass, and placed it under a clover leaf for shelter. The red cups that grew in the moss held as much dew as she wanted, and the cockchafer had taught her how to get honey. But summer does not last for ever, and by-and-by the flowers withered, and instead of dew there was snow and ice. Maia did not know what to do, for her clothes were worn to rags, and though she tried to roll herself up in a dry leaf it broke under her fingers. It soon was plain to her that if she did not get some other shelter she would die of hunger and cold.

So, gathering up all her courage, she left the forest and crossed the road into what had been, in the summer, a beautiful field of waving corn, but was now only a mass of hard stalks. She wandered on, seeing nothing but the sky above her head, till she suddenly found herself close to an opening which seemed to lead underground.

'It will be warm, at any rate,' thought Maia, 'and perhaps the person who lives there will give me something to eat. At any rate, I can't be worse off than I am now.' And she walked boldly down the passage. By-and-by she came to a door which stood ajar, and, peeping in, discovered a whole room full of corn. This gave her heart, and she went on more swiftly, till she reached a kitchen where an old field-mouse was baking a cake.

'You poor little animal,' cried the mouse, who had never seen anything like her before, 'you look starved to death! Come and sit here and get warm, and share my dinner with me.'

Maia almost wept with joy at the old mouse's kind words. She needed no second bidding, but ate more than she had ever done in her life, though it was not a breakfast for a humming-bird! When she had quite finished she put out her hand and smiled, and the old mouse said to her:

'Can you tell stories? If so you may stay with me till the sun gets hot again, and you shall help me with my house. But it is dull here in the winter unless you have somebody clever enough to amuse you.'

Yes, Maia had learned a great many stories from her foster-mother, and, besides, there were all her own adventures, and her escapes from death. She knew also how a room should be swept, and never failed to get up early in the morning and have everything clean and tidy for the old mouse.

So the winter passed away pleasantly, and Maia began to talk of the spring, and of the time when she would have to go out into the world again and seek her fortune.

'Oh, you need not begin to think of *that* for a while yet,' answered the field-mouse. 'Up on the earth they have a proverb:

When the day lengthens
Then the cold strengthens;

it has been quite warm up to now, and the snow may fall any time. Never a winter goes by without it, and *then* you will be very thankful you are *here*, and not outside! But I dare say it is quiet for a young thing like you,' she added, 'and I have invited my neighbour the mole to come and pay us a visit. He has been asleep all these months, but I hear he is waking up again. You would be a lucky girl if he took into his head to marry you, only, unfortunately, he is blind, and cannot see how pretty you are.' And for this blindness Maia felt truly glad, as she did not want a mole for a husband.

However, by-and-by he paid his promised visit, and Maia did not like him at all. He might be as rich and learned as possible, but he hated the sun, and the trees, and the flowers, and all that Maia loved best. To be sure, being blind, he had never seen them, and, like many other people, he thought that anything *he* did not know was not worth knowing. But Maia's tales amused him, though he would not for the world have let her see it, and he admired her voice when she sang:

Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?

or

Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree top;

though he told her that it was all nonsense, and that trees and gardens were mere foolishness. When she was *his* wife he would teach her things better worth learning.

'Meanwhile,' he said, with a grand air, 'I have burrowed a passage from this house to my own, in which you can walk; but I warn you not to be frightened at a great dead creature that has fallen through a hole in the roof, and is lying on one side.'

'What sort of creature is it?' asked Maia eagerly.

'Oh, I really can't tell you,' answered the mole, indifferently; 'it is covered with something soft, and it has two thin legs, and a long sharp thing sticking out of its head.'

'It is a bird,' cried Maia joyfully, 'and I love birds! It must have died of cold,' she added, dropping her voice. 'Oh! good Mr. Mole, do take me to see it!'

'Come then, as I am going home,' replied the mole. And calling to the old field-mouse to accompany them, they all set out.

'Here it is,' said the mole at last; 'dear me, how thankful I am Fate did not make me a bird. They can't say anything but "twit, twit," and die with the first breath of cold.'

'Ah, yes, poor useless creature,' answered the field-mouse. But while they were talking, Maia crept round to the other side and stroked the feathers of the little swallow, and kissed his eyes.

All that night she lay awake, thinking of the swallow lying dead in the passage. At length she could bear it no longer, and stole away to the place where the hay was kept, and wove a thick carpet. Next she went to the field-mouse's store of cotton, which she picked in the summer from some of the marsh flowers, and carrying them both down the passage, she tucked the cotton underneath the bird and spread the hay quilt over him.

'Perhaps you were one of the swallows who sang to me in the summer,' said she. 'I wish I could have brought you to life again; but now, good-bye!' And she laid her face, wet with tears, on the breast of the bird. Surely she felt a faint movement against her cheek? Yes, there it was again! Suppose the bird was not dead after all, but only senseless with cold and hunger! And at this thought Maia hastened back to the house, and brought some grains of corn, and a drop of water in a leaf. This she held close to the swallow's beak, which he opened unconsciously, and when he had sipped the water she gave him the grains one by one.

'Make no noise, so that no one may guess you are not dead,' said she. 'To-night I will bring you some more food, and I will tell the mole that he must stuff up the hole again, as it makes the passage too cold for me to walk in. And now farewell.' And off she went, back to the field-mouse, who was sound asleep.

After some days of Maia's careful nursing, the swallow felt strong enough to talk, and he told Maia how he came to be in the place where she found him. Before he was big enough to fly very high he had torn his wing in a rose-bush, so that he could not keep up with his family and friends when they took their departure to warmer lands. In their swift course they never noticed that their little brother was not with them, and at last he dropped on the ground from sheer fatigue, and must have rolled down the hole into the passage.

It was very lucky for the swallow that both the mole and the field-mouse thought he was dead, and did not trouble about him, so that when the spring *really* came, and the sun was hot, and blue hyacinths grew in the woods and primroses in the hedges, he was as tall and strong as any of his companions.

'You have saved my life, dear little Maia,' said he; 'but now the time has come for me to leave you—

unless,' he added, 'you will let me carry you on my back far away from this gloomy prison.'

Maia's eyes sparkled at the thought, but she shook her head bravely.

'Yes, you must go; but I must stay behind,' she answered. 'The field-mouse has been good to me, and I cannot desert her like that. Do you think you can open the hole for yourself?' she asked anxiously. 'If so, you had better begin now, for this evening we are to have supper with the mole, and it would never do for my foster-mother to find you working at it.'

'That is true,' answered the swallow. And flying up to the roof—which, after all, was not very high above them—he set to work with his bill, and soon let a flood of sunshine into the dark place.

'*Won't* you come with me, Maia?' said he. And though her heart longed for the trees and the flowers, she answered as before:

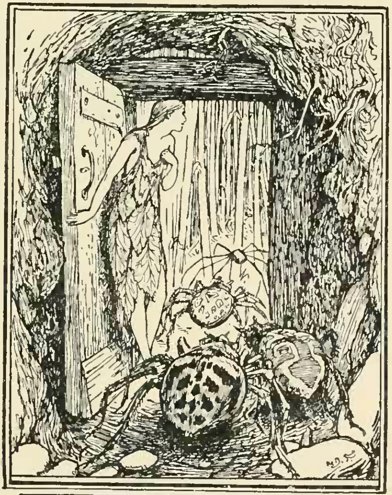
'No, I cannot.'

That one glimpse of the sun was all Maia had for some time, for the corn sprung up so thickly over the hole and about the house, that there might almost as well have been no sun at all. However, though she missed her bird friend every moment, she had no leisure to be idle, for the field-mouse had told her that very soon she was to be married to the mole, and kept her spinning wool and cotton for her outfit. And as she had never in her life made a dress, four clever spiders were persuaded to spend the days underground, turning the wool and cotton into tiny garments. Maia liked the clothes, but hated the thought of the blind mole, only she did not know how to escape him. In the evenings, when the spiders were going to their homes for the night, she would walk with them to the door and wait till a puff of wind blew the corn ears apart, and she could see the sky.

'If the swallow would only come now,' she said to herself, 'I would go with him to the end of the world.' But he never came!

'Your outfit is all finished,' said the field-mouse one day when the berries were red and the leaves yellow, 'and the mole and I have decided that your wedding shall be in four weeks' time.'

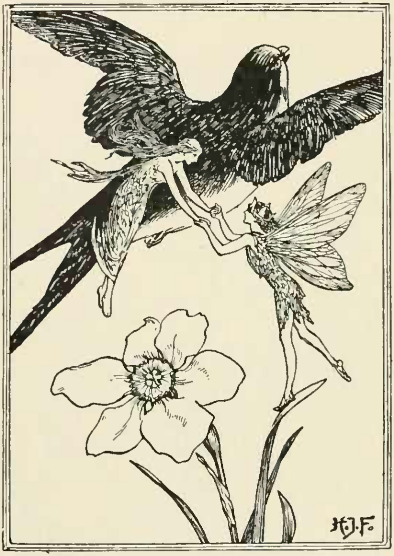
'Oh, not so soon! not so soon!' cried Maia, bursting into tears; which made the field-mouse very angry, and declare that Maia had no more sense than other girls, and did not know what was good for her. Then the mole arrived, and carried her on his back to see the new house he had dug for her, which was so very far under ground that Maia's tiny legs could never bring her up even as high as the field-mouse's dwelling, from which she might see the sunlight. Her heart grew heavier and heavier as the days went by, and in the last evening of


MAIA AND THE SPIDERS IN THE EVENING

all she crept out into the field among the stubble, to watch the sun set before she bade it good-bye for ever.

'Farewell, farewell,' she said, 'and farewell to my little swallow. Ah! if he only knew, he would come to help me.'

'Twit! twit,' cried a voice just above her; and the swallow fluttered to the ground beside her. 'You look sad; are you *really* going to let that ugly mole marry you?'



He helped her to jump from the Swallow's back

'I shall soon die, that is one comfort,' she answered weeping. But the swallow only said:

'Tut! tut! get on my back, as I told you before, and I will take you to a land where the sun always shines, and you will soon forget that such a creature as a mole ever existed.'

'Yes, I will come,' said Maia.

Then the swallow tore off one of the corn stalks with his strong beak, and bade her tie it safely to his wing. And they started off, flying, flying south for many a day.

Oh! how happy Maia was to see the beautiful earth again! A hundred times she longed for the swallow to stop, but he always told her that the best was yet to be; and they flew on and on, only halting for short rests, till they reached a place covered with tall white marble pillars, some standing high, wreathed in vines, out of which endless swallows' heads were peeping; others lying stretched among the flowers, white, yellow, and blue.

'I live up there,' said the swallow, pointing to the tallest of the pillars. 'But such a house would never do for you, as you would only fall out of it and kill yourself. So choose one of those flowers below, and you shall have it for your own, and sleep all night curled up in its leaves.'

'I will have that one,' answered Maia, pointing to a white flower shaped like a star, with a tiny crinkled wreath of red and yellow in its centre, and a long stem that swayed in the wind; 'that one is the prettiest of all, and it smells so sweet.' Then the swallow flew down towards it; but as they drew near they saw a tiny little manikin with a crown on his head, and wings on his shoulders, balancing himself on one of the leaves. 'Ah, that is the king of the flower-spirits,' whispered the swallow. And the king stretched out his hands to Maia, and helped her to jump from the swallow's back.

'I have waited for you for a long while,' said he, 'and now you have come at last to be my queen.'

And Maia smiled, and stood beside him as all the fairies that dwelt in the flowers ran to fetch presents for her; and the best of them all was a pair of lovely gauzy blue wings to help fly about like one of themselves.

So instead of marrying the mole, Little Maia was crowned a queen, and the fairies danced round her in a ring, while the swallow sang the wedding song.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

In a village in Hindustan there once lived a merchant who, although he rose early, worked hard, and rested late, remained very poor; and ill-luck so dogged him that he determined at last to go to some distant country and there to try his fortune. Twelve years passed by; his luck had turned, and now he had gathered great wealth, so that having plenty to keep him in comfort for the rest of his days, he thought once more of his native village, where he desired to spend the remainder of his life among his own people. In order to carry his riches with him in safety over the many weary miles that lay between him and his home, he bought some magnificent jewels, which he locked up in a little box and wore concealed upon his person; and, so as not to draw the attention of the thieves who infested the highways and made their living by robbing travellers, he started off in the poor clothes of a man who has nothing to lose.

Thus prepared, he travelled quickly, and within a few days' journey from his own village came to a city where he determined to buy better garments and—now that he was no longer afraid of thieves—to look more like the rich man he had become. In his new raiment he approached the city, and near the great gate he found a bazaar where, amongst many shops filled with costly silks, and carpets, and goods of all countries, was one finer than all the rest. There, amidst his goods, spread out to the best advantage, sat the owner smoking a long silver pipe, and thither the merchant bent his steps, and, saluting the owner politely, sat down also and began to make some purchases. Now, the proprietor of the shop, Beeka Mull by name, was a very shrewd man, and as he and the merchant conversed, he soon felt sure that his customer was richer than he seemed, and was trying to conceal the fact. Certain purchases having been made, he invited the new-comer to refresh himself, and in a short time they were chatting pleasantly together. In the course of the conversation Beeka Mull asked the merchant whither he was travelling, and hearing the name of the village, he observed:

'Ah, you had better be careful on that road—it's a very bad place for thieves.'

The merchant turned pale at these words. It would be such a bitter thing, he thought, just at the end of his journey to be robbed of all the fortune he had heaped up with such care. But this bland and prosperous Beeka Mull must surely know best, so presently he said:

'Lala-ji,[1] could you oblige me by locking up for me a small box for a short while? When once I get to my village I could bring back half-a-dozen sturdy men of my own kinsfolk and claim it again.'

The Lala shook his head. 'I could not do it,' replied he. 'I am sorry; but such things are not my business. I should be afraid to undertake it.'

'But,' pleaded the merchant, 'I know no one in this city, and you must surely have some place where you keep your own precious things. Do this, I pray you, as a great favour.'

Still Beeka Mull politely but firmly refused; but the merchant, feeling that he had now betrayed the fact that he was richer than he seemed, and being loth to make more people aware of it by inquiring elsewhere, continued to press him, until at last he consented. The merchant produced the little box of jewels, and Beeka Mull locked it up for him in a strong chest with other precious stones; and so, with many promises and compliments, they parted.

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[1] 'Lala' is a complimentary title; 'ji' a polite affix; the expression is somewhat equivalent to 'Dear Sir.'

In a place like an Eastern bazaar, where the shops lie with wide open fronts, and with their goods displayed not only within but without on terraces and verandahs raised a few feet above the public roadway, such a long talk as that between Beeka Mull and the merchant could not but attract some attention from the other shop-keepers in the narrow street. If the merchant had but known it, nearly every shop-owner in that district was a thief, and the cleverest and biggest of all was Beeka Mull. But he did not know it, only he could not help feeling a little uneasy at having thus parted with all his wealth to a stranger. And so, as he wandered down the street, making a purchase here and there, he managed in one way and another to ask some questions about the honesty of Beeka Mull, and each rascal whom he spoke to, knowing that there was some good reason in the question, and hoping to get in return some share of the spoils, replied in praise of Beeka Mull as a model of all the virtues.

In this way the merchant's fears were stilled, and, with a comparatively light heart, he travelled on to his village; and within a week or so returned to the city with half-a-dozen sturdy young nephews and friends whom he had enlisted to help him carry home his precious box.

At the great market-place in the centre of the city the merchant left his friends, saying that he would go and get the box of jewels and rejoin them, to which they consented, and away he went. Arrived at the shop of Beeka Mull, he went up and saluted him.

'Good-day, Lala-ji,' said he. But the Lala pretended not to see him. So he repeated the salutation. 'What do you want?' snapped Beeka Mull; 'you've said your "good-day" twice, why don't you tell me your business?'

'Don't you remember me?' asked the merchant.

'Remember you?' growled the other; 'no, why should I? I have plenty to do to remember good customers without trying to remember every beggar who comes whining for charity.'

When he heard this the merchant began to tremble.

'Lala-ji!' he cried, 'surely you remember me and the little box I gave you to take care of? And you promised—yes, indeed, you promised very kindly—that I might return to claim it, and——'

'You scoundrel,' roared Beeka Mull, 'get out of my shop! Be off with you, you impudent scamp! Every one knows that I never keep treasures for anyone; I have trouble enough to do to keep my own! Come, off with you!' With that he began to push the merchant out of the shop; and, when the poor man resisted, two of the bystanders came to Beeka Mull's help, and flung the merchant out into the road, like a bale of goods dropped from a camel. Slowly he picked himself up out of the dust, bruised, battered, and bleeding, but feeling nothing of the pain in his body, nothing but a dreadful numbing sensation that, after all, he was ruined and lost! Slowly he dragged himself a little further from where the fat and furious Beeka Mull still stood amongst his disordered silks and carpets, and coming to a friendly wall he crouched and leant against it, and putting his head into his hands gave himself up to an agony of misery and despair.

There he sat motionless, like one turned to stone, whilst darkness fell around him; and when, about eleven o'clock that night, a certain gay young fellow named Kooshy Ram passed by with a friend, he saw the merchant sitting hunched against the wall, and remarked: 'A thief, no doubt.' 'You are wrong,' returned the other, 'thieves don't sit in full view of people like that, even at night.' And so the two passed on, and thought no more of him. About five o'clock next morning Kooshy Ram was returning home again, when, to his astonishment, he saw the miserable merchant still sitting as he had seen him sit hours before. Surely something must be the matter with a man who sat all night in the open street, and Kooshy Ram resolved to see what it was; so he went up and shook the merchant gently by the shoulder. 'Who are you?' asked he—'and what are you doing here—are you ill?'

'Ill?' said the merchant in a hollow voice, 'yes; ill with a sickness for which there is no medicine.'

'Oh, nonsense!' cried Kooshy Ram. 'Come along with me, I know a medicine that will cure you, I think.' So the young man seized the merchant by the arm, and hoisting him to his feet, dragged him to his own lodging; where he first of all gave him a large glass of wine, and then, after he had refreshed him with food, bade him tell his adventures.

Meanwhile the merchant's companions in the market-place, being dull-witted persons, thought that as he did not return he must have gone home by himself; and as soon as they were tired of waiting they went back to their village and left him to look after his own affairs. He would therefore have fared badly had it not been for his rescuer, Kooshy Ram, who, whilst still a boy, had been left a great deal of money with no one to advise him how to spend it. He was high-spirited, kind-hearted, and shrewd into the bargain; but he threw away his money like water, and generally upon the nearest thing or person in his way, and that, alas! most often was himself! Now, however, he had taken it into his head to befriend this miserable merchant, and he meant to do it; and on his side the merchant felt confidence revive, and without further ado told all that had happened.

Kooshy Ram laughed heartily at the idea of any stranger entrusting his wealth to Beeka Mull.

'Why, he is the greatest rascal in the city,' he cried, 'unless you believe what some of them say of me!

Well, there is nothing to be done for the present, but just to stay here quietly, and I think that at the end of a short time I shall find a medicine which will heal your sickness.' At this the merchant again took courage, and a little ease crept into his heart as he gratefully accepted his new friend's invitation.

A few days later Kooshy Ram sent for some friends to see him, and talked with them long, and, although the merchant did not hear the conversation, he did hear shouts of laughter as though at some good joke; but the laughter echoed dully in his own heart, for the more he considered the more he despaired of ever recovering his fortune from the grasp of Beeka Mull.

One day, soon after this, Kooshy Ram came to him and said:

'You remember the wall where I found you that night, near Beeka Mull's shop?'

'Yes, indeed I do,' answered the merchant.

'Well,' continued Kooshy Ram, 'this afternoon you must go and stand in that same spot and watch; and when someone gives you a signal, you must go up to Beeka Mull and salute him and say, "Oh, Lala-ji, will you kindly let me have back that box of mine which you have on trust?"'

'What's the use of that?' asked the merchant. 'He won't do it any more now than he would when I asked him before.'

'Never mind!' replied Kooshy Ram, 'do exactly what I tell you, and repeat exactly what I say, word for word, and I will answer for the rest.'

So, that afternoon, the merchant at a certain time went and stood by the wall as he was told. He noticed that Beeka Mull saw him, but neither took any heed of the other. Presently up the bazaar came a gorgeous palanquin like those in which ladies of rank are carried about. It was borne by four bearers well dressed in rich liveries, and its curtains and trappings were truly magnificent. In attendance was a grave-looking personage whom the merchant recognised as one of the friends who visited Kooshy Ram; and behind him came a servant with a box covered with a cloth upon his head.

The palanquin was borne along at a smart pace and was set down at Beeka Mull's shop. The fat shop-keeper was on his feet at once, and bowed deeply as the gentleman in attendance advanced.

'May I inquire,' he said, 'who this is in the palanquin that deigns to favour my humble shop with a visit? And what may I do for her?'

The gentleman, after whispering at the curtain of the palanquin, explained that this was a relative of his who was travelling, but as her husband could go no further with her, she desired to leave with Beeka Mull a box of jewels for safe custody. Lala bowed again to the ground. 'It was not,' he said, 'quite in his way of business; but of course, if he could please the lady, he would be most happy, and would guard the box with his life.' Then the servant carrying the box was called up; the box was unlocked, and a mass of jewellery laid open to the gaze of the enraptured Lala, whose mouth watered as he turned over the rich gems.

All this the merchant had watched from the distance, and now he saw—could he be mistaken?—no, he distinctly saw a hand beckoning through the curtain on that side of the palanquin away from the shop. 'The signal! Was this the signal?' thought he. The hand beckoned again, impatiently it seemed to him. So forward he went, very quietly, and saluting Beeka Mull, who was sitting turning over the contents of this amazing box of jewels which fortune and some fools were putting into his care, he said:

'Oh, Lala-ji, will you kindly let me have back that box of mine which you have on trust?'

The Lala looked up as though he had been stung; but quickly the thought flashed through his mind that if this man began making a fuss again he would lose the confidence of these new and richer customers; so he controlled himself, and answered:

'Dear me, of course, yes! I had forgotten all about it.' And he went off and brought the little box and put it into the merchant's trembling hands. Quickly the latter pulled out the key, which hung by a string round his neck, and opened the box; and when he saw that his treasures were all there he rushed into the road, and, with the box under his arm, began dancing like a madman, with great shouts and screams of laughter. Just then a messenger came running up and, saluting the gentleman attending the palanquin, he said:

'The lady's husband has returned, and is prepared to travel with her, so that there is no necessity to deposit the jewels.' Whereat the gentleman quickly closed and re-locked the box, and handed it back to the waiting servant. Then from the palanquin came a yell of laughter, and out jumped—not a lady—but Kooshy Ram, who immediately ran and joined the merchant in the middle of the road and danced as madly as he. Beeka Mull stood and stared stupidly at them; then, with a shrill cackle of laughter, he flung off his turban, bounced out into the road with the other two, and fell to dancing and snapping his fingers until he was out of breath.

'Lala-ji,' said the gentleman who had played the part of the relative attendant on the palanquin, 'why do you dance? The merchant dances because he has recovered his fortune; Kooshy Ram dances because he is a madman and has tricked you; but why do *you* dance?'

'I dance,' panted Beeka Ram, glaring at him with a bloodshot eye, 'I dance because I knew thirteen different ways of deceiving people by pretending confidence in them. I didn't know there were any more, and now here's a fourteenth! That's why I dance!'

[Punjâbî story, Major Campbell, Feroshepore.]

THE GREEN KNIGHT

There lived once a king and queen who had an only daughter, a charming and beautiful girl, dearer to them than anything else in the world. When the princess was twelve years old the queen fell sick, and nothing that could be done for her was of any use. All the doctors in the kingdom did their best to cure her, but in spite of their efforts she grew worse and worse. As she was about to die, she sent for the king and said to him:

'Promise me that whatever our daughter asks, you will do, no matter whether you wish to or not.'

The king at first hesitated, but as she added:

'Unless you promise this I cannot die in peace,' he at length did as she desired, and gave the promise, after which she became quite happy and died.

It happened that near the king's palace lived a noble lady, whose little girl was of about the same age as the princess, and the two children were always together. After the queen's death the princess begged that this lady should come to live with her in the palace. The king was not quite pleased with this arrangement, for he distrusted the lady; but the princess wished so much for it that he did not like to refuse.

'I am lonely, father,' she said, 'and all the beautiful presents you give me cannot make up to me for the loss of my mother. If this lady comes to live here I shall almost feel as if the queen had come back to me.'

So a magnificent suite of rooms was prepared and set aside for the new-comers and the little princess was wild with joy at the thought of having her friends so near her. The lady and her daughter arrived, and for a long time all went well. They were very kind to the motherless princess, and she almost began to forget how dull she had been before they came. Then, one day, as she and the other girl were playing together in the gardens of the palace, the lady came to them, dressed for a journey, and kissed the princess tenderly, saying:

'Farewell, my child; my daughter and I must leave you and go far away.'

The poor princess began to cry bitterly. 'Oh! you must not leave me!' she sobbed. 'What shall I do without you? Please, oh! please stay.'

The lady shook her head.

'It almost breaks my heart to go, dear child,' she said, 'but, alas! it must be.'

'Is there nothing that can keep you here?' asked the princess.

'Only one thing,' answered the lady, 'and as that is impossible, we will not speak of it.'

'Nothing is impossible,' persisted the princess. 'Tell me what it is, and it shall be done.'

So at last her friend told her.

'If the king, your father, would make me his queen I would stay,' she said; 'but that he would never do.'

'Oh, yes! *that* is easy enough!' cried the princess, delighted to think that, after all, they need not be parted. And she ran off to find her father, and beg him to marry the lady at once. He had done everything she asked, and she was quite certain he would do it.

'What is it, my daughter?' he asked, when he saw her. 'You have been crying—are you not happy?'

'Father,' she said, 'I have come to ask you to marry the countess'—(for that was the lady's real title)—'if you do not she will leave us, and then I shall be as lonely as before. You have never refused me what I have asked before, do not refuse me now.'

The king turned quite pale when he heard this. He did not like the countess, and so, of course, he did not wish to marry her; besides, he still loved his dead wife.

'No that I cannot do, my child,' he said at last.

At these words the princess began to cry once more, and the tears ran down her cheeks so fast, and she sobbed so bitterly, that her father felt quite miserable too. He remembered the promise he had given always to do what his daughter asked him, and in the end he gave way, and promised to marry the countess. The princess at once was all smiles, and ran away to tell the good news.

Soon after, the wedding was celebrated with great festivities, and the countess became queen; but, in spite of all the joy and merriment that filled the palace, the king looked pale and sad, for he was certain that ill would come of the marriage. Sure enough, in a very short time the queen's manner towards the princess began to change. She was jealous of her because she, instead of her own daughter, was heir to the throne, and very soon she could no longer hide her thoughts. Instead of speaking kindly and lovingly as before, her words became rough and cruel, and once or twice she even slapped the princess's face.

The king was very unhappy at seeing his dearly loved daughter suffer, and at last she became so wretched that he could no longer bear it. Calling her to him one day he said:

'My daughter, you are no longer merry as you should be, and I fear that it is the fault of your step-mother. It will be better for you to live with her no longer; therefore I have built you a castle on the island in the lake, and that is to be your home in future. There you can do just as you like, and your step-mother will never enter it.'

The princess was delighted to hear this, and still more pleased when she saw the castle, which was full of beautiful things, and had a great number of windows looking out on the lovely blue water. There was a boat in which she might row herself about, and a garden where she could walk whenever she wished without fear of meeting the unkind queen; and the king promised to visit her every day.

For a long time she dwelt in peace, and grew more and more beautiful every day. Everyone who saw her said 'The princess is the loveliest lady in the land.' And this was told to the queen, who hated her step-daughter still more because her own daughter was ugly and stupid.

One day it was announced that a great meeting of knights and nobles was to be held in a neighbouring kingdom distant about two days' journey. There were to be all kinds of festivities, and a tournament was to be fought and a banquet held, in honour of the coming of age of the prince of the country.

The princess's father was amongst those invited, but before he set out he went to take leave of his daughter. Although she had such a beautiful home, and was no longer scolded by the queen, the poor princess was dreadfully lonely, and she told her father that it would be better if she were dead. He did his best to comfort her and promised that he would soon return. Was there anything he could do to help her?

'Yes,' she said. 'You may greet the Green Knight from me.'

Now the king wondered a little at these words, for he had never heard of the Green Knight; but there was no time to ask questions, therefore he gave the promise, and rode off on his journey. When he came to the palace where the festivities were to take place, the first thing he did was to ask:

'Can anyone tell me where I may find the Green Knight?'

No, they were very sorry; but none had ever heard of such a person either—certainly he was not to be found there. At this the king grew troubled, and not even the banquet or the tournament could make him feel happier.

He inquired of everyone he saw, 'Do you know the Green Knight?' but the only answer he got was:

'No, your majesty, we have never heard of him.'

At length he began to believe that the princess was mistaken, and that there was no such person; and he started on his homeward journey sorrowfully enough, for this was the first time for many months that the princess had asked him to do anything for her and he could not do it. He thought so much about it that he did not notice the direction his horse was taking, and presently he found himself in the midst of a dense forest where he had never been before. He rode on and on, looking for the path, but as the sun began to set he realised that he was lost. At last, to his delight, he saw a man driving some pigs, and riding up to him, he said:

'I have lost my way. Can you tell me where I am?'

'You are in the Green Knight's forest,' answered the man, 'and these are his pigs.'

At that the king's heart grew light. 'Where does the Green Knight live?' he asked.

'It is a very long way from here,' said the swineherd; 'but I will show you the path.' So he went a little farther with the king and put him on the right road, and the king bade him farewell.

Presently he came to a second forest, and there he met another swineherd driving pigs.

'Whose beasts are those, my man?' he asked.

'They are the Green Knight's,' said the man.

'And where does he live?' inquired the king.

'Oh, not far from here,' was the reply.

Then the king rode on, and about midday he reached a beautiful castle standing in the midst of the loveliest garden you can possibly imagine, where fountains played in marble basins, and peacocks walked on the smooth lawns. On the edge of a marble basin sat a young and handsome man, who was dressed from head to foot in a suit of green armour, and was feeding the goldfish which swam in the clear water.

'This must be the Green Knight,' thought the king; and going up to the young man he said courteously:

'I have come, sir, to give you my daughter's greeting. But I have wandered far, and lost my way in your forest.'

The knight looked at him for a moment as though puzzled.

'I have never met either you or your daughter,' he said at last; 'but you are very welcome all the same.' And he waved his hand towards the castle. However, the king took no notice, and told him that his daughter had sent a message to the Green Knight, and as he was the only Green Knight in the kingdom this message must be for him.

'You must pass the night with me here,' said the knight; and as the sun was already set, the king was thankful to accept the invitation. They sat down in the castle hall to a magnificent banquet, and although he had travelled much and visited many monarchs in their palaces, the king had never fared better than at the table of the Green Knight, whilst his host himself was so clever and agreeable, that he was delighted, and thought 'what a charming son-in-law this knight would make!'

Next morning, when he was about to set forth on his journey home, the Green Knight put into his hand a jewelled casket, saying:

'Will your highness graciously condescend to carry this gift to the princess, your daughter? It contains my portrait, that when I come she may know me; for I feel certain that she is the lady I have seen night after night in a dream, and I must win her for my bride.'

The king gave the knight his blessing, and promised to take the gift to his daughter. With that he set off, and ere long reached his own country.

The princess was awaiting him anxiously when he arrived, and ran to his arms in her joy at seeing her dear father again.

'And did you see the Green Knight?' she asked.

'Yes,' answered the king, drawing out the casket the knight had sent, 'and he begged me to give you this that you may know him when he arrives and not mistake him for somebody else.'

When the princess saw the portrait she was delighted, and exclaimed: 'It is indeed the man whom I have seen in my dreams! Now I shall be happy, for he and no other shall be my husband.'

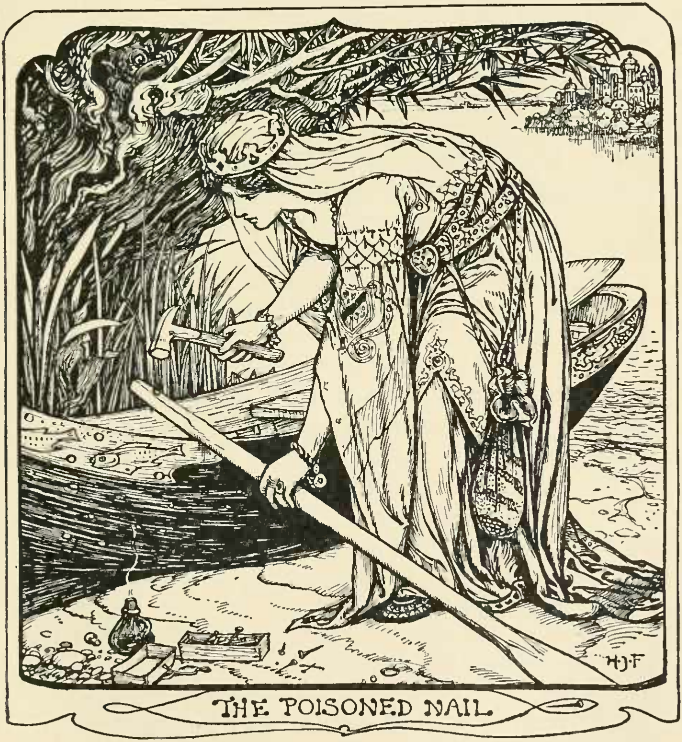
Very soon after the Green Knight arrived, and he looked so handsome in his green armour, with a long green plume in his helmet, that the princess fell still more in love with him than before, and when he saw her, and recognised her as the lady whom he had so often dreamt of, he immediately asked her to be his bride. The princess looked down and smiled as she answered him:

'We must keep the secret from my step-mother until the wedding-day,' said she, 'for otherwise she will find a way to do us some evil.'

'As you please,' replied the prince; 'but I must visit you daily, for I can live no longer without you! I will come early in the morning and not leave until it is dark; thus the queen will not see me row across the lake.'

For a long time, the Green Knight visited the princess every day, and spent many hours wandering with her through the beautiful gardens where they knew the queen could not see them. But secrets, as you know, are dangerous things, and at last, one morning, a girl who was in service at the palace happened to be walking by the lake early in the morning and beheld a wonderfully handsome young man, in a beautiful suit of green satin, come down to the edge of the lake. Not guessing that he was watched, he got into a little boat that lay moored to the bank, and rowed himself over to the island where the princess's castle stood. The girl went home wondering who the knight could be; and as she was brushing the queen's hair, she said to her:

'Does your majesty know that the princess has a suitor?'



THE POISONED NAIL.

'Nonsense!' replied the queen crossly. But she was dreadfully vexed at the mere idea, as her own daughter was still unmarried, and was likely to remain so, because she was so ill-tempered and stupid that no one wanted her.

'It is true,' persisted the girl. 'He is dressed all in green, and is very handsome. I saw him myself, though he did not see me, and he got into a boat and rowed over to the island, and the princess was waiting for him at the castle door.'

'I must find out what this means,' thought the queen. But she bade her maid of honour cease chattering and mind her own business.

Early next morning the queen got up and went down to the shore of the lake, where she hid herself behind a tree. Sure enough there came a handsome knight dressed in green, just as the maid of honour had said, and he got into a boat and rowed over to the island where the princess awaited him. The angry queen remained by the lake all day, but it was not until the evening that the knight returned, and leaping on shore, he tied the boat to its moorings and went away through the forest.

'I have caught my step-daughter nicely,' thought the queen. 'But she shall not be married before my own sweet girl. I must find a way to put a stop to this.'

Accordingly she took a poisoned nail and stuck it in the handle of the oar in such a way that the knight would be sure to scratch his hand when he picked up the oar. Then she went home laughing, very much pleased with her cleverness.

The next day the Green Knight went to visit the princess as usual; but directly he took up the oars to row over to the island he felt a sharp scratch on his hand.

'Oof!' he said, dropping the oars from pain, 'what can have scratched so?' But, look as he might, only a tiny mark was to be seen.

'Well, it's strange how a nail could have come here since yesterday,' he thought. 'Still, it is not very serious, though it hurts a good deal.' And, indeed, it seemed such a little thing that he did not mention it to the princess. However, when he reached home in the evening, he felt so ill he was obliged to go to bed, with no one to attend on him except his old nurse. But of this, of course, the princess knew nothing; and the poor girl, fearing lest some evil should have befallen him, or some other maiden more beautiful than she should have stolen his heart from her, grew almost sick with waiting. Lonely indeed she was, for her father, who would have helped her, was travelling in a foreign country, and she knew not how to obtain news of her lover.

In this manner time passed away, and one day, as she sat by the open window crying and feeling very sad, a little bird came and perched on the branch of a tree that stood just underneath. It began to sing, and so beautifully that the princess was obliged to stop crying and listen to it, and very soon she found out that the bird was trying to attract her attention.

'*Tu-whit, tu-whit!* your lover is sick!' it sang.

'Alas!' cried the princess. 'What can I do?'

'*Tu-whit, tu-whit!* you must go to your father's palace!'

'And what shall I do there?' she asked.

'*Tu-whit!* there you will find a snake with nine young ones.'

'Ugh!' answered the princess with a shiver, for she did not like snakes. But the little bird paid no heed.

'Put them in a basket and go to the Green Knight's palace,' said she.

'And what am I to do with them when I get there?' she cried, blushing all over, though there was no one to see her but the bird.

'Dress yourself as a kitchen-maid and ask for a place. *Tu-whit!* Then you must make soup out of the snakes. Give it three times to the knight and he will be cured. *Tu-whit!*'

'But what has made him ill?' asked the princess. The bird, however, had flown away, and there was nothing for it but to go to her father's palace and look for the snakes. When she came there she found the mother snake with the nine little snakes all curled up so that you could hardly tell their heads from their tails. The princess did not like having to touch them, but when the old snake had wriggled out of the nest to bask a little in the sun, she picked up the young ones and put them in a basket as the bird had told her, and ran off to find the Green Knight's castle. All day she walked along, sometimes stopping to pick the wild berries, or to gather a nosegay; but though she rested now and then, she would not lie down to sleep before she reached the castle. At last she came in sight of it, and just then she met a girl driving a flock of geese.

'Good day!' said the princess; 'can you tell me if this is the castle of the Green Knight?'

'Yes, that it is,' answered the goose-girl, 'for I am driving his geese. But the Green Knight is very ill, and they say that unless he can be cured within three days he will surely die.'

At this news the princess grew as white as death. The ground seemed to spin round, and she closed her hand tight on a bush that was standing beside her. By-and-by, with a great effort, she recovered herself and said to the goose-girl:

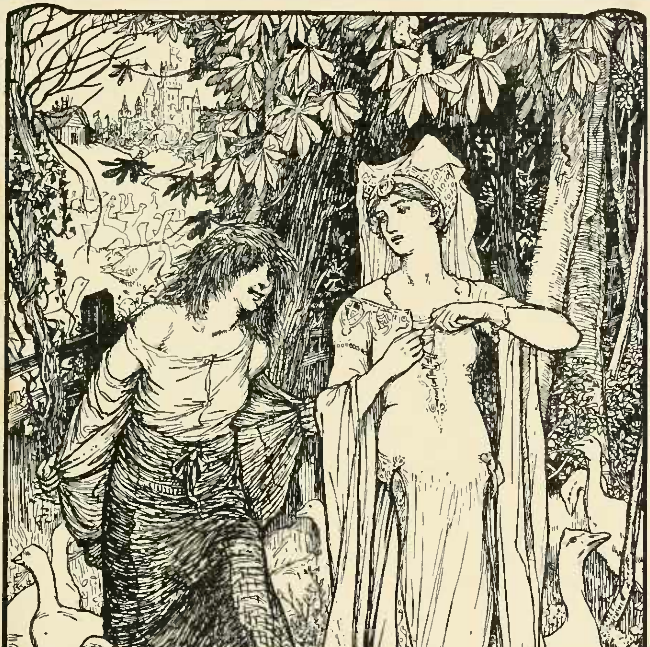
'Would you like to have a fine silk dress to wear?'

The goose-girl's eyes glistened.

'Yes, that I would!' answered she.

'Then take off your dress and give it to me, and I will give you mine,' said the princess.

The girl could scarcely believe her ears, but the princess was already unfastening her beautiful silk dress, and taking off her silk stockings and pretty red shoes; and the goose-girl lost no time in slipping out of her rough linen skirt and tunic. Then the princess put on



The Princess changes clothes with the Goose-girl

the other's rags and let down her hair, and went to the kitchen to ask for a place.

'Do you want a kitchen-maid?' she said.

'Yes, we do,' answered the cook, who was too busy to ask the new-comer many questions.

The following day, after a good night's rest, the princess set about her new duties. The other servants were speaking of their master, and saying to each other how ill he was, and that unless he could be cured within three days he would surely die.

The princess thought of the snakes, and the bird's advice, and lifting her head from the pots and pans she was scouring, she said: 'I know how to make a soup that has such a wonderful power that whoever tastes it is sure to be cured, whatever his illness may be. As the doctors cannot cure your master shall I try?'

At first they all laughed at her.

'What! a scullion cure the knight when the best physicians in the kingdom have failed?'

But at last, just because all the physicians *had* failed, they decided that it would do no harm to try; and she ran off joyfully to fetch her basket of snakes and make them into broth. When this was ready she carried some to the knight's room and entered it boldly, pushing aside all the learned doctors who stood beside his bed. The poor knight was too ill to know her, besides, she was so ragged and dirty that he would not have been likely to do so had he been well; but when he had taken the soup he was so much better that he was able to sit up.

The next day he had some more, and then he was able to dress himself.

'That is certainly wonderful soup!' said the cook.

The third day, after he had eaten his soup, the knight was quite well again.

'Who are you?' he asked the girl; 'was it you who made this soup that has cured me?'

'Yes,' answered the princess.

'Choose, then, whatever you wish as a reward,' said the knight, 'and you shall have it.'

'I would be your bride!' said the princess.

The knight frowned in surprise at such boldness, and shook his head.

'That is the one thing I cannot grant,' he said, 'for I am pledged to marry the most beautiful princess in the world. Choose again.'

Then the princess ran away and washed herself and mended her rags, and when she returned the Green Knight recognised her at once.

You can think what a joyful meeting that was!

Soon after, they were married with great splendour. All the knights and princes in the kingdom were summoned to the wedding, and the princess wore a dress that shone like the sun, so that no one had ever beheld a more gorgeous sight. The princess's father, of course, was present, but the wicked queen and her daughter were driven out of the country, and as nobody has seen them since, very likely they were eaten by wild beasts in the forest. But the bride and bridegroom were so happy that they forgot all about them, and they lived with the old king till he died, when they succeeded him.

[From "*Eventyr fra Jylland,*" *samlede og optegnede af Evald Tang Kristensen.* Translated from the Danish by Mrs. Skovgaard-Pedersen.]

THE FIVE WISE WORDS OF THE GURU.[1]

Once there lived a handsome young man named Ram Singh, who, though a favourite with everyone, was unhappy because he had a scold for a step-mother. All day long she went on talking, until the youth was driven so distracted that he determined to go away somewhere and seek his fortune. No sooner had he decided to leave his home than he made his plans, and the very next morning he started off with a few clothes in a wallet, and a little money in his pocket.

But there was one person in the village to whom he wished to say good-bye, and that was a wise old guru, or teacher, who had taught him much. So he turned his face first of all towards his master's hut, and before the sun was well up was knocking at his door. The old man received his pupil affectionately; but he was wise in reading faces, and saw at once that the youth was in trouble.

'My son,' said he, 'what is the matter?'

'Nothing, father,' replied the young man, 'but I have determined to go into the world and seek my fortune.'

'Be advised,' returned the guru, 'and remain in your father's house; it is better to have half a loaf at home than to seek a whole one in distant countries.'

But Ram Singh was in no mood to heed such advice, and very soon the old man ceased to press him.

'Well,' said he at last, 'if your mind is made up I suppose you must have your way. But listen carefully, and remember five parting counsels which I will give you; and if you keep these no evil shall befall you. First—always obey without question the orders of him whose service you enter; second—never speak harshly or unkindly to anyone; third—never lie; fourth—never try to appear the equal of those above you in station; and fifth—wherever you go, if you meet those who read or teach from the holy books, stay and listen, if but for a few minutes, that you may be strengthened in the path of duty.'

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[1] A Hindu religious teacher or saint; in this case a Sikh.

Then Ram Singh started out upon his journey, promising to bear in mind the old man's words.

After some days he came to a great city. He had spent all the money which he had at starting, and therefore resolved to look for work however humble it might be. Catching sight of a prosperous-looking merchant standing in front of a shop full of grain of all kinds, Ram Singh went up to him and asked whether he could give him anything to do. The merchant gazed at him so long that the young man began to lose heart, but at length he answered:

'Yes, of course; there is a place waiting for you.'

'What do you mean?' asked Ram Singh.

'Why,' replied the other, 'yesterday our rajah's chief wazir dismissed his body servant and is wanting another. Now you are just the sort of person that he needs, for you are young and tall, and handsome; I advise you to apply there.'

Thanking the merchant for this advice, the young man set out at once for the wazir's house, and soon managed, thanks to his good looks and appearance, to be engaged as the great man's servant.

One day, soon after this, the rajah of the place started on a journey and the chief wazir accompanied him. With them was an army of servants and attendants, soldiers, muleteers, camel-drivers, merchants with grain and stores for man and beast, singers to make entertainment by the way and musicians to accompany them, besides elephants, camels, horses, mules, ponies, donkeys, goats, and carts and wagons of every kind and description, so that it seemed more like a large town on the march than anything else.

Thus they travelled for several days, till they entered a country that was like a sea of sand, where the swirling dust floated in clouds, and men and beasts were half choked by it. Towards the close of that day they came to a village, and when the headmen hurried out to salute the rajah and to pay him their respects, they began, with very long and serious faces, to explain that, whilst they and all that they had were of course at the disposal of the rajah, the coming of so large a company had nevertheless put them into a dreadful difficulty because they had never a well nor spring of water in their country; and they had no water to give drink to such an army of men and beasts!

Great fear fell upon the host at the words of the headmen, but the rajah merely told the wazir that he must get water somehow, and that settled the matter so far as *he* was concerned. The wazir sent off in haste for all the oldest men in the place, and began to question them as to whether there were no wells near by.

They all looked helplessly at each other, and said nothing; but at length one old grey-beard replied:

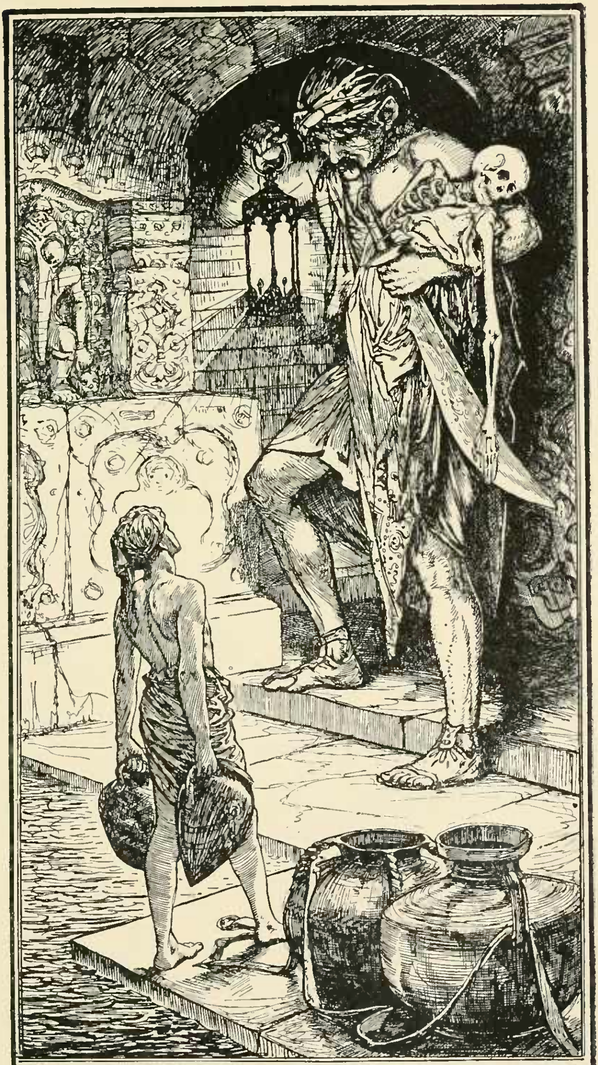
'Truly, Sir Wazir, there is, within a mile or two of this village, a well which some former king made hundreds of years ago. It is, they say, great and inexhaustible, covered in by heavy stone-work and with a flight of steps leading down to the water in the very bowels of the earth; but no man ever goes near it because it is haunted by evil spirits, and it is known that whoso disappears down the well shall never be seen again.'

The wazir stroked his beard and considered a moment. Then he turned to Ram Singh who stood behind his chair.

'There is a proverb,' said he, 'that no man can be trusted until he has been tried. Go you and get the rajah and his people water from this well.'

Then there flashed into Ram Singh's mind the first counsel of the old guru—'*Always obey without question the orders of him whose service you enter*.' So he replied at once that he was ready, and left to prepare for his adventure. Two great brazen vessels he fastened to a mule, two lesser ones he bound upon his shoulders, and thus provided he set out, with the old villager for his guide. In a short time they came to a spot where some big trees towered above the barren country, whilst under their shadow lay the dome of an ancient building. This the guide pointed out as the well, but excused himself from going further as he was an old man and tired, and it was already nearly sunset, so that he must be returning home. So Ram Singh bade him farewell, and went on alone with the mule.

Arrived at the trees, Ram Singh tied up his beast, lifted the vessels from his shoulder, and having found the opening of the well, descended by a flight of steps which led down into the darkness. The steps were broad white slabs of alabaster which gleamed in the shadows as he went lower and lower. All was very silent. Even the sound of his bare feet upon the pavement seemed to wake an echo in that lonely place, and when one of the vessels which he carried slipped and fell upon the steps it clanged so loudly that he jumped at the noise. Still he went on, until at last he reached a wide pool of sweet water, and there he washed his jars with care before he filled them, and began to remount the steps with the lighter vessels, as the big ones were so heavy he could only take up one at a time. Suddenly, something moved above him, and looking up he saw a great giant standing on the stairway! In one hand he held clasped to his heart a dreadful looking mass of bones, in the other was a lamp which cast long shadows



WHAT THINK YOU O MORTAL OF MY FAIR AND LOVELY WIFE?

about the walls, and made him seem even more terrible than he really was.

'What think you, O mortal,' said the giant, 'of my fair and lovely wife?' And he held the light towards the bones in his arms and looked lovingly at them.

Now I must tell you that this poor giant had had a very beautiful wife, whom he had loved dearly; but, when she died, her husband refused to believe in her death, and always carried her about long after she had become nothing but bones. Ram Singh of course did not know of this, but there came to his mind the second wise saying of the guru, which forbade him to speak harshly or inconsiderately to others; so he replied:

'Truly, sir, I am sure you could find nowhere such another.'

'Ah, what eyes you have!' cried the delighted giant, 'you at least can see! I do not know how often I have slain those who insulted her by saying she was but dried bones! You are a fine young man, and I will help you.'

So saying, he laid down the bones with great tenderness, and snatching up the huge brass vessels, carried them up again, and replaced them with such ease that it was all done by the time that Ram Singh had reached the open air with the smaller ones.

'Now,' said the giant, 'you have pleased me, and you may ask of me one favour, and whatever you wish I will do it for you. Perhaps you would like me to show you where lies buried the treasure of dead kings?' he added eagerly.

But Ram Singh shook his head at the mention of buried wealth.

'The favour that I would ask,' said he, 'is that you will leave off haunting this well, so that men may go in and out and obtain water.'

Perhaps the giant expected some favour more difficult to grant, for his face brightened, and he promised to depart at once; and as Ram Singh went off through the gathering darkness with his precious burden of water, he beheld the giant striding away with the bones of his dead wife in his arms.

Great was the wonder and rejoicing in the camp when Ram Singh returned with the water. He never said anything, however, about his adventure with the giant, but merely told the rajah that there was nothing to prevent the well being used; and used it was, and nobody ever saw any more of the giant.

The rajah was so pleased with the bearing of Ram Singh that he ordered the wazir to give the young man to him in exchange for one of his own servants. So Ram Singh became the rajah's attendant; and as the days went by the king became more and more delighted with the youth because, mindful of the old guru's third counsel, he was always honest and spoke the truth. He grew in favour rapidly, until at last the rajah made him his treasurer, and thus he reached a high place in the court and had wealth and power in his hands. Unluckily the rajah had a brother who was a very bad man; and this brother thought that if he could win the young treasurer over to himself he might by this means manage to steal little by little any of the king's treasure which he needed. Then, with plenty of money, he could bribe the soldiers and some of the rajah's counsellors, head a rebellion, dethrone and kill his brother, and reign himself instead. He was too wary, of course, to tell Ram Singh of all these wicked plans; but he began by flattering him whenever he saw him, and at last offered him his daughter in marriage. But Ram Singh remembered the fourth counsel of the old guru—never to try to appear the equal of those above him in station—therefore he respectfully declined the great honour of marrying a princess. Of course the prince, baffled at the very beginning of his enterprise, was furious, and determined to work Ram Singh's ruin, and entering the rajah's presence he told him a story about Ram Singh having spoken insulting words of his sovereign and of his daughter. What it was all about nobody knew, and, as it was not true, the wicked prince did not know either; but the rajah grew very angry and red in the face as he listened, and declared that until the treasurer's head was cut off neither he nor the princess nor his brother would eat or drink.

'But,' added he, 'I do not wish anyone to know that this was done by my desire, and anyone who mentions the subject will be severely punished.' And with this the prince was forced to be content.

Then the rajah sent for an officer of his guard, and told him to take some soldiers and ride at once to a tower which was situated just outside the town, and if anyone should come to inquire when the building was going to be finished, or should ask any other questions about it, the officer must chop his head off, and bring it to him. As for the body, that could be buried on the spot. The old officer thought these instructions rather odd, but it was no business of his, so he saluted, and went off to do his master's bidding.

Early in the morning the rajah, who had not slept all night, sent for Ram Singh, and bade him go to the new hunting-tower, and ask the people there how it was getting on and when it was going to be finished, and to hurry back with the answer! Away went Ram Singh upon his errand, but, on the road, as he was passing a little temple on the outskirts of the city, he heard someone inside reading aloud; and, remembering the guru's fifth counsel, he just stepped inside and sat down to listen for a minute. He did not mean to stay longer, but became so deeply interested in the wisdom of the teacher, that he sat, and sat, and sat, while the sun rose higher and higher.

In the meantime, the wicked prince, who dared not disobey the rajah's command, was feeling very hungry; and as for the princess, she was quietly crying in a corner waiting for the news of Ram Singh's death, so that she might eat her breakfast.

Hours passed, and stare as he might from the window no messenger could be seen.

At last the prince could bear it no longer, and hastily disguising himself so that no one should recognise him, he jumped on a horse and galloped out to the hunting-tower, where the rajah had told him that the execution was to take place. But, when he got there, there was no execution going on. There were only some men engaged in building, and a number of soldiers idly watching them. He forgot that he had disguised himself and that no one would know him, so, riding up, he cried out:

'Now then, you men, why are you idling about here instead of finishing what you came to do? When is it to be done?'

At his words the soldiers looked at the commanding officer, who was standing a little apart from the rest. Unperceived by the prince he made a slight sign, a sword flashed in the sun, and off flew a head on the ground beneath!

As part of the prince's disguise had been a thick beard, the men did not recognise the dead man as the rajah's brother; but they wrapped the head in a cloth, and buried the body as their commander bade them. When this was ended, the officer took the cloth, and rode off in the direction of the palace.

Meanwhile the rajah came home from his council, and to his great surprise found neither head nor brother awaiting him; as time passed on, he became uneasy, and thought that he had better go himself and see what the matter was. So ordering his horse he rode off alone.

It happened that, just as the rajah came near to the temple where Ram Singh still sat, the young treasurer, hearing the sound of a horse's hoofs, looked over his shoulder and saw that the rider was the rajah himself!

Feeling much ashamed of himself for having forgotten his errand, he jumped up and hurried out to meet his master, who reined up his horse, and seemed very surprised (as indeed he was) to see *him*. At that moment there arrived the officer of the guard carrying his parcel. He saluted the rajah gravely, and, dismounting, laid the bundle in the road and began to undo the wrappings, whilst the rajah watched him with wonder and interest. When the last string was undone, and the head of his brother was displayed to his view, the rajah sprang from his horse and caught the soldier by the arm. As soon as he could speak he questioned the man as to what had occurred, and little by little a dark suspicion darted through him. Then, briefly telling the soldier that he had done well, the rajah drew Ram Singh to one side, and in a few minutes learned from him how, in attending to the guru's counsel, he had delayed to do the king's message.

In the end the rajah found from some papers the proofs of his dead brother's treachery; and Ram Singh established his innocence and integrity. He continued to serve the rajah for many years with unswerving fidelity; and married a maiden of his own rank in life, with whom he lived happily; dying at last honoured and loved by all men. Sons were born to him; and, in time, to them also he taught the five wise sayings of the old guru.

[A Punjâbi story.]

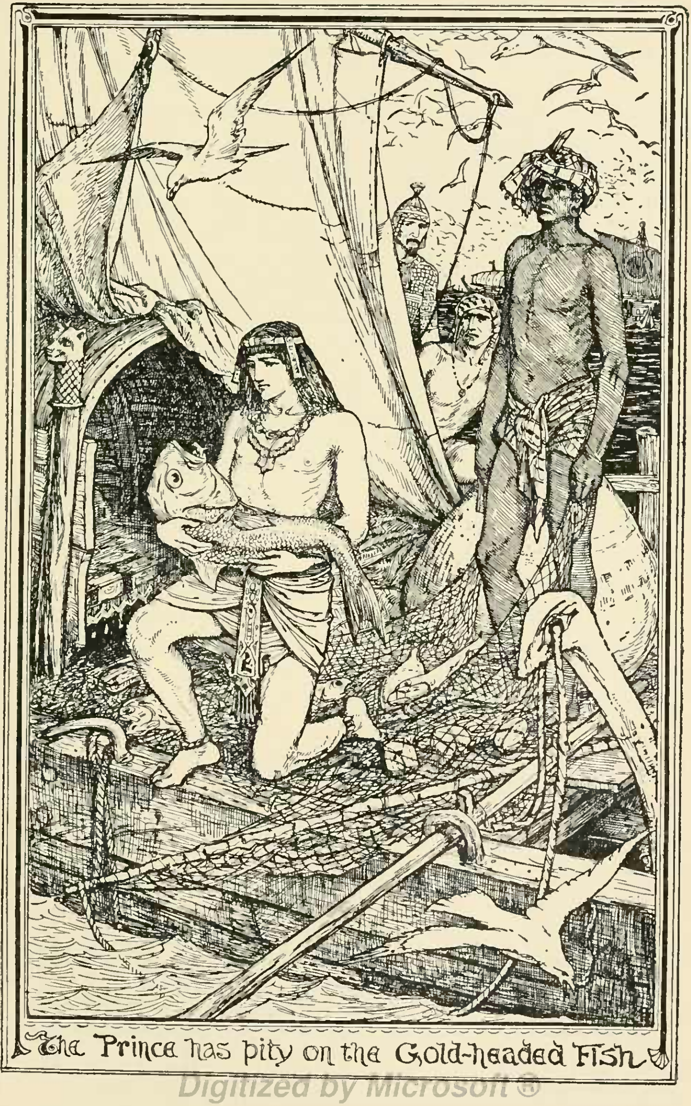
THE GOLDEN-HEADED FISH

Once upon a time there lived in Egypt a king who lost his sight from a bad illness. Of course he was very unhappy, and became more so as months passed, and all the best doctors in the land were unable to cure him. The poor man grew so thin from misery that everyone thought he was going to die, and the prince, his only son, thought so too.

Great was therefore the rejoicing through Egypt when a traveller arrived in a boat down the river Nile, and after questioning the people as to the reason of their downcast looks, declared that he was court physician to the king of a far country, and would, if allowed, examine the eyes of the blind man. He was at once admitted into the royal presence, and after a few minutes of careful study announced that the case, though very serious, was not quite hopeless.

'Somewhere in the Great Sea,' he said, 'there exists a Golden-headed Fish. If you can manage to catch this creature, bring it to me, and I will prepare an ointment from its blood which will restore your sight. For a hundred days I will wait here, but if at the end of that time the fish should still be uncaught, I must return to my own master.'

The next morning the young prince set forth in quest of the fish, taking with him a hundred men, each man carrying a net. Quite a little fleet of boats was awaiting them, and in these they sailed to the middle of the Great Sea. During three months they laboured



The Prince has pity on the Gold-headed Fish

diligently from sunrise to sunset, but though they caught large multitudes of fishes, not one of them had a golden head.

'It is quite useless now,' said the prince on the very last night. 'Even if we find it this evening, the hundred days will be over in an hour, and long before we could reach the Egyptian capital the doctor will be on his way home. Still, I will go out again, and cast the net once more myself.' And so he did, and at the very moment that the hundred days were up, he drew in the net with the Golden-headed Fish entangled in its meshes.

'Success has come, but, as happens often, it is too late,' murmured the young man, who had studied in the schools of philosophy; 'but, all the same, put the fish in that vessel full of water, and we will take it back to show my father that we have done what we could.' But when he drew near the fish it looked up at him with such piteous eyes that he could not make up his mind to condemn it to death. For he knew well that, though the doctors of his own country were ignorant of the secret of the ointment, they would do all in their power to extract something from the fish's blood. So he picked up the prize of so much labour, and threw it back into the sea, and then began his journey back to the palace. When at last he reached it he found the king in a high fever, caused by his disappointment, and he refused to believe the story told him by his son.

'Your head shall pay for it! Your head shall pay for it!' cried he; and bade the courtiers instantly summon the executioner to the palace.

But of course somebody ran at once to the queen, and told her of the king's order, and she put common clothes on the prince, and filled his pockets with gold, and hurried him on board a ship which was sailing that night for a distant island.

'Your father will repent some day, and then he will be thankful to know you are alive,' said she. 'But one last counsel will I give you, and that is, take no man into your service who desires to be paid every month.'

The young prince thought this advice rather odd. If the servant had to be paid anyhow, he did not understand what difference it could make whether it was by the year or by the month. However, he had many times proved that his mother was wiser than he, so he promised obedience.

After a voyage of several weeks, he arrived at the island of which his mother had spoken. It was full of hills and woods and flowers, and beautiful white houses stood everywhere in gardens.

'What a charming spot to live in,' thought the prince. And he lost no time in buying one of the prettiest of the dwellings.

Then servants came pressing to offer their services; but as they all declared that they must have payment at the end of every month, the young man, who remembered his mother's words, declined to have anything to say to them. At length, one morning, an Arab appeared and begged that the prince would engage him.

'And what wages do you ask?' inquired the prince, when he had questioned the new-comer and found him suitable.

'I do not want money,' answered the Arab; 'at the end of a year you can see what my services are worth to you, and can pay me in any way you like.' And the young man was pleased, and took the Arab for his servant.

Now, although no one would have guessed it from the look of the side of the island where the prince had landed, the other part was a complete desert, owing to the ravages of a horrible monster which came up from the sea, and devoured all the corn and cattle. The governor had sent bands of soldiers to lie in wait for the creature in order to kill it; but, somehow, no one ever happened to be awake at the moment that the ravages were committed. It was in vain that the sleepy soldiers were always punished severely—the same thing invariably occurred next time; and at last heralds were sent throughout the island to offer a great reward to the man who could slay the monster.

As soon as the Arab heard the news, he went straight to the governor's palace.

'If my master can succeed in killing the monster, what reward will you give him?' asked he.

'My daughter and anything besides that he chooses,' answered the governor. But the Arab shook his head.

'Give him your daughter and keep your wealth,' said he; 'but, henceforward, let her share in your gains, whatever they are.'

'It is well,' replied the governor; and ordered a deed to be prepared, which was signed by both of them.

That night the Arab stole down to the shore to watch, but, before he set out, he rubbed himself all over with some oil which made his skin smart so badly that there was no chance of *his* going to sleep as the soldiers had done. Then he hid himself behind a large rock and waited. By-and-by a swell seemed to rise on the water, and, a few minutes later, a hideous monster—part bird, part beast, and part serpent—stepped noiselessly on to the rocks. It walked stealthily up towards the fields, but the Arab was ready for it, and, as it passed, plunged his dagger into the soft part behind the ear. The creature staggered and gave a loud cry, and then rolled over dead, with its feet in the sea.

The Arab watched for a little while, in order to make sure that there was no life left in his enemy, but as the huge body remained quite still, he quitted his hiding-place, and cut off the ears of his foe. These he carried to his master, bidding him show them to the governor, and declare that he himself, and no other, had killed the monster.

'But it was you, and not I, who slew him,' objected the prince.

'Never mind; do as I bid you. I have a reason for it,' answered the Arab. And though the young man did not like taking credit for what he had never done, at length he gave in.

The governor was so delighted at the news that he begged the prince to take his daughter to wife that very day; but the prince refused, saying that all he desired was a ship which would carry him to see the world. Of course this was granted him at once, and when he and his faithful Arab embarked they found, heaped up in the vessel, stores of diamonds and precious stones, which the grateful governor had secretly placed there.

So they sailed, and they sailed, and they sailed; and at length they reached the shores of a great kingdom. Leaving the prince on board, the Arab went into the town to find out what sort of a place it was. After some hours he returned, saying that he heard that the king's daughter was the most beautiful princess in the world, and that the prince would do well to ask for her hand.

Nothing loth, the prince listened to this advice, and taking some of the finest necklaces in his hand, he mounted a splendid horse which the Arab had bought for him, and rode up to the palace, closely followed by his faithful attendant.

The strange king happened to be in a good humour, and they were readily admitted to his presence. Laying down his offerings on the steps of the throne, he prayed the king to grant him his daughter in marriage.

The monarch listened to him in silence; but answered, after a pause:

'Young man, I will give you my daughter to wife, if that is your wish; but first I must tell you that she has already gone through the marriage ceremony with a hundred and ninety young men, and not one of them lived for twelve hours after. So think, while there is yet time.'

The prince *did* think, and was so frightened that he very nearly went back to his ship without any more words. But just as he was about to withdraw his proposal the Arab whispered:

'Fear nothing, but take her.'

'The luck must change some time,' he said, at last; 'and who would not risk his head for the hand of such a peerless princess?'

'As you will,' replied the king. 'Then I will give orders that the marriage shall be celebrated to-night.'

And so it was done; and after the ceremony the bride and bridegroom retired to their own apartments to sup by themselves, for such was the custom of the country. The moon shone bright, and the prince walked to the window to look out upon the river and upon the distant hills, when his gaze suddenly fell on a silken shroud neatly laid out on a couch, with his name embroidered in gold thread across the front; for this also was the pleasure of the king.

Horrified at the spectacle, he turned his head away, and this time his glance rested on a group of men, digging busily beneath the window. It was a strange hour for anyone to be at work, and what was the hole for? It was a curious shape, so long and narrow, almost like—— Ah! yes, that was what it was! It was *his* grave that they were digging!

The shock of the discovery rendered him speechless, yet he stood fascinated and unable to move. At this moment a small black snake darted from the mouth of the princess, who was seated at the table, and wriggled quickly towards him. But the Arab was watching for something of the sort to happen, and seizing the serpent with some pincers that he held in one hand, he cut off its head with a sharp dagger.

The king could hardly believe his eyes when, early the next morning, his new son-in-law craved an audience of his Majesty.

'What, you?' he cried, as the young man entered.

'Yes, I. Why not?' asked the bridegroom, who thought it best to pretend not to know anything that had occurred. 'You remember, I told you that the luck must turn at last, and so it has. But I came to ask whether you would be so kind as to bid the gardeners fill up a great hole right underneath my window, which spoils the view.'

'Oh! certainly, yes; of course it shall be done!' stammered the king. 'Is there anything else?'

'No, nothing, thank you,' replied the prince, as he bowed and withdrew.

Now, from the moment that the Arab cut off the snake's head, the spell, or whatever it was, seemed to have been taken off the princess, and she lived very happily with her husband. The days passed swiftly in hunting in the forests, or sailing on the broad river that flowed past the palace, and when night fell she would sing to her harp, or the prince would tell her tales of his own country.

One evening a man in a strange garb, with a face burnt brown by the sun, arrived at court. He asked to see the bridegroom, and falling on his face announced that he was a messenger sent by the Queen of Egypt, proclaiming him king in succession to his father, who was dead.

'Her Majesty begs you will set off without delay, and your bride also, as the affairs of the kingdom are somewhat in disorder,' ended the messenger.

Then the young man hastened to seek an audience of his father-in-law, who was delighted to find that his daughter's husband was not merely the governor of a province, as he had supposed, but the king of a powerful country. He at once ordered a splendid ship to be made ready, and in a week's time rode down to the harbour, to bid farewell to the young couple.

In spite of her grief for the dead king, the queen was overjoyed to welcome her son home, and commanded the palace to be hung with splendid stuffs to do honour to the bride. The people expected great things from their new sovereign, for they had suffered much from the harsh rule of the old one, and crowds presented themselves every morning with petitions in their hands, which they hoped to persuade the king to grant. Truly, he had enough to keep him busy; but he was very happy for all that, till, one night, the Arab came to him, and begged permission to return to his own land.

Filled with dismay the young man said: 'Leave me! Do you really wish to leave me?' Sadly the Arab bowed his head.

'No, my master; never could I wish to leave you! But I have received a summons, and I dare not disobey it.'

The king was silent, trying to choke down the grief he felt at the thought of losing his faithful servant.

'Well, I must not try to keep you,' he faltered out at last. 'That would be a poor return for all that you have done for me! Everything I have is yours: take what you will, for without you I should long ago have been dead!'

'And without *you*, *I* should long ago have been dead,' answered the Arab. '*I* am the Golden-headed Fish.'

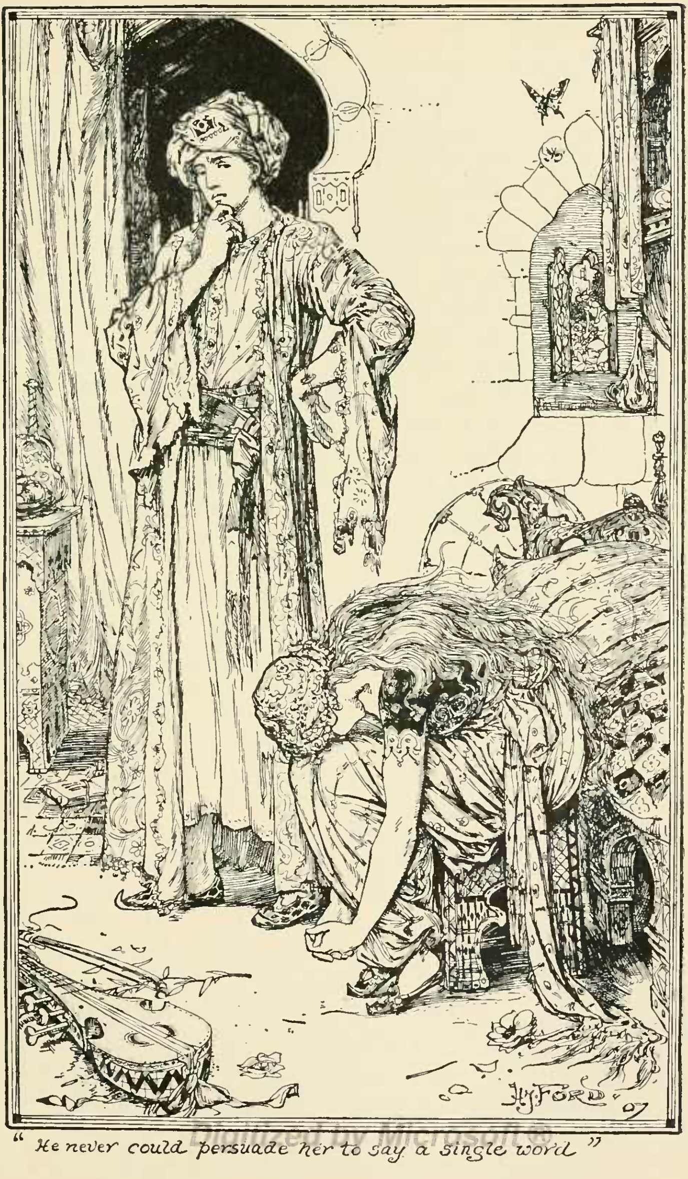
[Adapted from *Contes Arméniens*. Par Frédéric Macler, Paris. Ernest Leroux, Editeur.]

DORANI

Once upon a time there lived in a city of Hindustan a seller of scents and essences, who had a very beautiful daughter named Dorani. This maiden had a friend who was a fairy, and the two were high in favour with Indra, the king of fairyland, because they were able to sing so sweetly and dance so deftly that no one in the kingdom could equal them for grace and beauty. Dorani had the most lovely hair in the world, for it was like spun gold, and the smell of it was like the smell of fresh roses. But her locks were so long and thick that the weight of it was often unbearable, and one day she cut off a shining tress, and wrapping it in a large leaf, threw it in the river which ran just below her window. Now it happened that the king's son was out hunting, and had gone down to the river to drink, when there floated towards him a folded leaf, from which came a perfume of roses. The prince, with idle curiosity, took a step into the water and caught the leaf as it was sailing by. He opened it, and within he found a lock of hair like spun gold, and from which came a faint, exquisite odour.

When the prince reached home that day he looked so sad and was so quiet that his father wondered if any ill had befallen him, and asked what was the matter. Then the youth took from his breast the tress of hair which he had found in the river, and holding it up to the light, replied :

'See, my father, was ever hair like this? Unless I may win and marry the maiden that owns that lock I must die!'



"He never could persuade her to say a single word"

So the king immediately sent heralds throughout all his dominions to search for the damsel with hair like spun gold; and at last he learned that she was the daughter of the scent-seller. The object of the herald's mission was quickly noised abroad, and Dorani heard of it with the rest; and, one day, she said to her father:

'If the hair is mine, and the king requires me to marry his son I must do so; but, remember, you must tell him that if, after the wedding, I stay all day at the palace, every night will be spent in my old home.'

The old man listened to her with amazement, but answered nothing, as he knew she was wiser than he. Of course the hair was Dorani's, and the heralds soon returned and informed the king, their master, who summoned the scent-seller, and told him that he wished for his daughter to be given in marriage to the prince. The father bowed his head three times to the ground, and replied:

'Your highness is our lord, and all that you bid us we will do. The maiden asks this only—that if, after the wedding, she stays all day at the palace, she may go back each night to her father's house.'

The king thought this a very strange request; but said to himself it was, after all, his son's affair, and the girl would surely soon get tired of going to and fro. So he made no difficulty, and everything was speedily arranged and the wedding was celebrated with great rejoicings.

At first, the condition attaching to his wedding with the lovely Dorani troubled the prince very little, for he thought that he would at least see his bride all day. But, to his dismay, he found that she would do nothing but sit the whole time upon a stool with her head bowed forward upon her knees, and he could never persuade her to say a single word. Each evening she was carried in a palanquin to her father's house, and each morning she was brought back soon after daybreak; and yet never a sound passed her lips, nor did she show by any sign that she saw, or heard, or heeded her husband.

One evening the prince, very unhappy and troubled, was wandering in an old and beautiful garden near the palace. The gardener was a very aged man, who had served the prince's great grandfather; and when he saw the prince he came and bowed himself to him, and said:

'Child! child! why do you look so sad—is aught the matter?' Then the prince replied, 'I am sad, old friend, because I have married a wife as lovely as the stars, but she will not speak to me, and I know not what to do. Night after night she leaves me for her father's house, and day after day she sits in mine as though turned to stone, and utters no word, whatever I may do or say.'

The old man stood thinking for a moment, and then he hobbled off to his own cottage. A little later he came back to the prince with five or six small packets, which he placed in his hands and said:

'To-morrow, when your bride leaves the palace, sprinkle the powder from one of these packets upon your body, and while seeing clearly, you will become yourself invisible. More I cannot do for you, but may all go well!'

And the prince thanked him, and put the packets carefully away in his turban.

The next night, when Dorani left for her father's house in her palanquin, the prince took out a packet of the magic powder and sprinkled it over himself, and then hurried after her. He soon found that, as the old man had promised, he was invisible to everyone, although he felt as usual, and could see all that passed. He speedily overtook the palanquin and walked beside it to the scent-seller's dwelling. There it was set down, and, when his bride, closely veiled, left it and entered the house, he, too, entered unperceived.

At the first door Dorani removed one veil; then she entered another doorway at the end of a passage where she removed another veil; next she mounted the stairs, and at the door of the women's quarters removed a third veil. After this she proceeded to her own room where were set two large basins, one of attar of roses and one of water; in these she washed herself, and afterwards called for food. A servant brought her a bowl of curds, which she ate hastily, and then arrayed herself in a robe of silver, and wound about her strings of pearls, while a wreath of roses crowned her hair. When fully dressed, she seated herself upon a four-legged stool over which was a canopy with silken curtains, these she drew around her, and then called out:

'Fly, stool, to the palace of rajah Indra.'

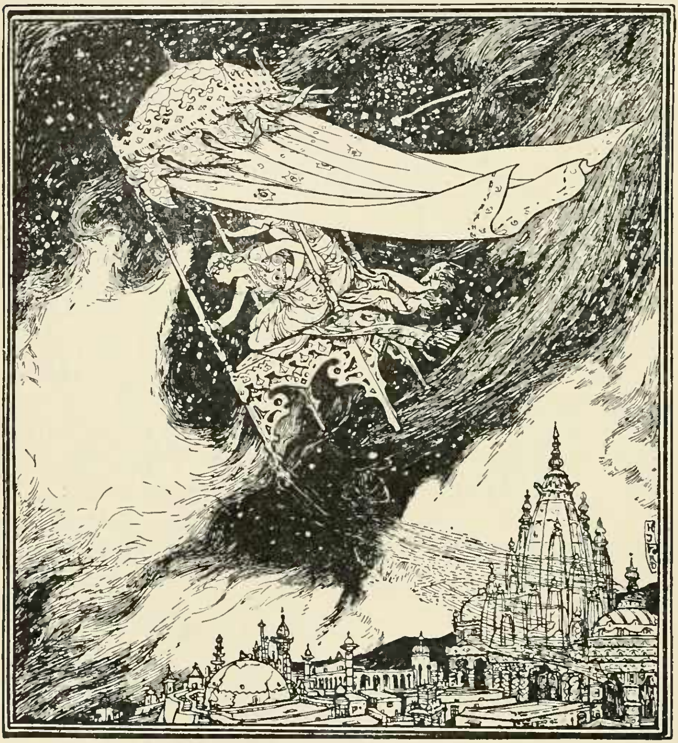
Instantly the stool rose in the air, and the invisible prince, who had watched all these proceedings with great wonder, seized it by one leg as it flew away, and found himself being borne through the air at a rapid rate.

In a short while they arrived at the house of the fairy who, as I told you before, was the favourite friend of Dorani. The fairy stood waiting on the threshold, as beautifully dressed as Dorani herself was, and when the stool stopped at her door she cried in astonishment:

'Why, the stool is flying all crooked to-day! What is the reason of that, I wonder? I suspect that you have been talking to your husband, and so it will not fly straight.'

But Dorani declared that she had not spoken one word to him, and she couldn't think why the stool flew as if weighed down at one side. The fairy still looked doubtful, but made no answer, and took her seat beside Dorani, the prince again holding tightly one leg. Then the stool flew on through the air until it came to the palace of Indra the rajah.

All through the night the women sang and danced before the rajah Indra, whilst a magic lute played of itself the most bewitching music; till the prince, who sat watching it all, was quite entranced. Just before dawn the rajah gave the signal to cease; and again the two women seated themselves on the stool, and, with the prince clinging to the leg, it flew back to earth, and bore Dorani and her husband safely to the scent-seller's shop.



THE INVISIBLE PRINCE GOES WITH THE LADIES

Here the prince hurried away by himself past Dorani's palanquin with its sleepy bearers, straight on to the palace; and as he passed the threshold of his own rooms he became visible again. Then he lay down upon a couch and waited for Dorani's arrival.

As soon as she arrived she took a seat and remained as silent as usual, with her head bowed on her knees. For a while not a sound was heard, but presently the prince said:

'I dreamed a curious dream last night, and as it was all about you I am going to tell it you, although you heed nothing.'

The girl, indeed, took no notice of his words, but in spite of that he proceeded to relate every single thing that had happened the evening before, leaving out no detail of all that he had seen or heard. And when he praised her singing—and his voice shook a little—Dorani just looked at him; but she said naught, though, in her own mind, she was filled with wonder. 'What a dream!' she thought. 'Could it have been a dream? How could he have learnt in a dream all she had done or said?' Still she kept silent; only she looked that once at the prince, and then remained all day as before, with her head bowed upon her knees.

When night came the prince again made himself invisible and followed her. The same things happened again as had happened before, but Dorani sang better than ever. In the morning the prince a second time told Dorani all that she had done, pretending that he had dreamt of it. Directly he had finished Dorani gazed at him, and said:

'Is it true that you dreamt this, or were you really there?'

'I was there,' answered the prince.

'But why do you follow me?' asked the girl.

'Because,' replied the prince, 'I love you, and to be with you is happiness.'

This time Dorani's eyelids quivered; but she said no more, and was silent the rest of the day. However, in the evening, just as she was stepping into her palanquin, she said to the prince:

'If you love me, prove it by not following me to-night.'

And so the prince did as she wished, and stayed at home.

That evening the magic stool flew so unsteadily that they could hardly keep their seats, and at last the fairy exclaimed:

'There is only one reason that it should jerk like this! You have been talking to your husband!'

And Dorani replied: 'Yes, I have spoken; oh, yes, I have spoken!' But no more would she say.

That night Dorani sang so marvellously that at the end the rajah Indra rose up and vowed that she might ask what she would and he would give it to her. At first she was silent; but, when he pressed her, she answered:

'Give me the magic lute.'

The rajah, when he heard this, was displeased with himself for having made so rash a promise, because this lute he valued above all his possessions. But as he had promised, so he must perform, and with an ill grace he handed it to her.

'You must never come here again,' said he, 'for, once having asked so much, how will you in future be content with smaller gifts?'

Dorani bowed her head silently as she took the lute, and passed with the fairy out of the great gate, where the stool awaited them. More unsteadily than before, it flew back to earth.

When Dorani got to the palace that morning she asked the prince whether he had dreamt again. He laughed with happiness, for this time she had spoken to him of her own free will; and he replied:

'No; but I begin to dream now—not of what *has* happened in the past, but of what *may* happen in the future.'

That day Dorani sat very quietly, but she answered the prince when he spoke to her; and when evening fell, and with it the time for her departure, she still sat on. Then the prince came close to her and said softly:

'Are you not going to your house, Dorani?'

At that she rose and threw herself weeping into his arms, whispering gently:

'Never again, my lord, never again would I leave thee!'

So the prince won his beautiful bride; and though they neither of them dealt any further with fairies and their magic, they learnt more daily of the magic of Love, which one may still learn, although fairy magic has fled away.

[Punjâbi story, Major Campbell, Feroshepcre.]

THE SATIN SURGEON

Once upon a time there was a very rich and powerful king who, in spite of having been married several times, had only two daughters.

The elder was extremely plain—she squinted and was hunchbacked ; but at the same time she was very clever and amusing, so, though at heart both spiteful and untruthful, she was her father's favourite.

The younger princess, on the other hand, was both lovely and sweet-tempered, and those who knew her well could hardly say whether her charming face or pleasant manners were the more attractive.

The neighbouring country was governed by a young emperor, who, though not much over twenty years of age, had shown great courage in battle, and, had he wished it, might very likely have conquered the whole world. Luckily he preferred peace to war, and occupied his time with trying to rule his own kingdom well and wisely. His people were very anxious that he should marry, and as the two princesses were the only ladies to be heard of of suitable age and rank, the emperor sent envoys to their father's court to ask for the hand of one of them in marriage. But, as he was resolved only to marry a woman whom he could love and be happy with, he determined to see the lady himself before making up his mind. For this purpose he set out in disguise not long after the departure of his ambassadors, and arrived at the palace very soon after they did ; but as he had foolishly kept his plan secret, he found, when he reached the court, that they had already made proposals for the elder princess.

Now the emperor might just as well have gone openly, for his presence soon became known; and when the king heard of it he prepared to receive him royally, though of course he had to pretend that he had no idea who he was. So it was settled that the ambassadors should present their master under the name of one of the princes, and in this manner he was received by the king.

At night there was a grand ball at which the young emperor was able to see the two princesses and to make their acquaintance. The ugly face and figure and spiteful remarks of the elder displeased him so greatly that he felt he could not marry her even if she owned ten kingdoms, whilst the sweet face and gentle manners of the younger sister charmed him so much that he would gladly have shared his throne with her had she been only a simple shepherdess.

He found it very difficult to conceal his thoughts and to pay the elder princess the amount of attention due to her, though he did his best to be polite; while all he saw or heard during the next few days only increased his love for her younger sister, and at last he confessed that his dearest wish was to make her his wife, if she and her father would grant his desire.

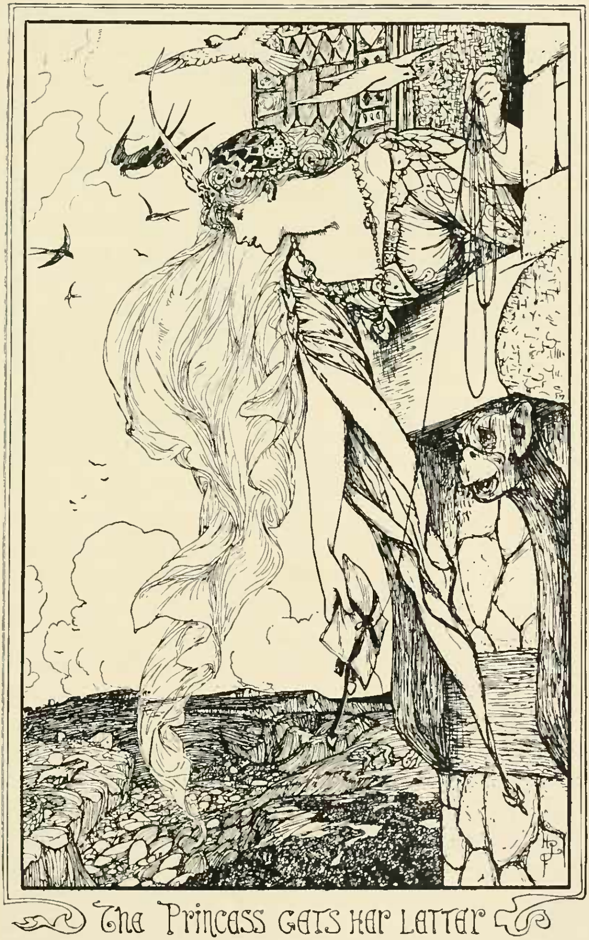
He had commanded his ambassadors to put off their farewell audience for a little time, hoping that the king might perceive the state of his feelings; but when it could be deferred no longer, he bade them propose in his name for the younger princess.

On hearing this news, so different from what he had been led to expect, the king, who—as we have said before—was devoted to his elder daughter and entirely under her influence, could hardly contain his displeasure. Directly the audience was over he sent for the princess and told her of the insolent proposal the emperor had made for her sister. The princess was even more furious than her father, and after consulting together they decided to send the younger daughter to some distant place out of reach of the young emperor; but *where* this should be they did not quite know. However, at length, after they had both racked their brains to find a suitable prison, they fixed on a lonely castle called the Desert Tower, where they thought she would be quite safe.

Meantime, it was thought best to let the court gaieties go on as usual, and orders were given for all sorts of splendid entertainments; and on the day that was fixed for carrying off the princess, the whole court was invited to a great hunt in the forest.

The emperor and the young princess were counting the hours till this morning, which promised to be so delightful, should dawn. The king and his guest arrived together at the meeting place, but what was the surprise and distress of the young man at not seeing the object of his love amongst the ladies present. He waited anxiously, looking up and down, not hearing anything that the king said to him; and when the hunt began and she still was absent, he declined to follow, and spent the whole day seeking her, but in vain.

On his return, one of his attendants told him that some hours before he had met the princess's carriage, escorted by a troop of soldiers who were riding on each side, so that no one could get speech of her. He had followed them at a distance, and saw them stop at the Desert Tower, and on its return he noticed that the carriage was empty. The emperor was deeply grieved by this news. He left the court at once, and ordered his ambassadors to declare war the very next day, unless the king promised to set free the princess. And more than this, no sooner had he reached his own country than he raised a large army, with which he seized the frontier towns, before his enemy had had time to collect any troops. But, ere he quitted the court, he took care to write a letter to his beloved princess,



The Princess gets her Letter

imploring her to have patience, and trust to him; and this he gave into the hands of his favourite equerry, who would he knew lay down his life in his service.

With many precautions the equerry managed to examine the surroundings of the tower, and at last discovered, not only where the princess lodged, but that a little window in her room looked out on a desolate plot full of brambles.

Now the unhappy princess was much annoyed that she was not even allowed to take the air at this little window, which was the only one in her room. Her keeper was her elder sister's former nurse, a woman whose eyes never slept. Not for an instant could she be induced to stir from the side of the princess, and she watched her slightest movement.

One day, however, the spy was for once busy in her room writing an account of the princess to her elder sister, and the poor prisoner seized the opportunity to lean out of the window. As she looked about her she noticed a man hidden amongst the bushes, who stepped forward as soon as he caught sight of her, and showed her a letter, which he took from his jerkin. She at once recognised him as one of the emperor's attendants, and let down a long string, to which he tied the letter. You can fancy how quickly she drew it up again, and luckily she had just time to read it before her gaoler had finished her report and entered the room.

The princess's delight was great, and next day she managed to write an answer on a sheet of her note book, and to throw it down to the equerry, who hastened to carry it back to his master. The emperor was so happy at having news of his dear princess, that he resolved, at all risks, to visit the Desert Tower himself, if only to see her for a moment. He ordered his equerry to ask leave to visit her, and the princess replied that she should indeed rejoice to see him, but that she feared that her gaoler's watchfulness would make his journey useless, unless he came during the short time when the old woman was writing alone in her own room.

Naturally, the bare idea of difficulties only made the emperor more eager than ever. He was ready to run any risks, but, by the advice of the equerry, he decided to try cunning rather than force. In his next letter he enclosed a sleeping powder, which the princess managed to mix with her gaoler's supper, so that when the emperor reached the tower in the evening the princess appeared fearlessly at her window on hearing his signal. They had a long and delightful conversation, and parted in the fond hope that their meeting had not been observed. But in this they were sadly mistaken. The watchful eyes of the old nurse were proof against any sleeping draught—she had seen and heard all; and lost no time in writing to report everything to her mistress.

The news made the spiteful little hunchback furious, and she resolved to be cruelly revenged for the contempt with which the emperor had treated her. She ordered her nurse to pretend not to notice what might be passing, and meantime she had a trap made so that if the emperor pushed his way through the brambles at the foot of the tower, it would not only catch him, as if he were a mouse, but would let loose a number of poisoned arrows, which would pierce him all over. When it was ready, the trap was hidden amongst the brambles without being observed by the princess.

That same evening the emperor hurried to the tower with all the impatience of love. As he came near he heard the princess break into a long, joyous peal of laughter. He advanced quickly to give the usual signal, when suddenly his foot trod on something, he knew not what. A sharp, stinging pain ran through him, and he turned white and faint, but, luckily, the trap had only opened a little way, and only a few of the arrows flew out. For a moment he staggered, and then fell to the ground covered with blood.

Had he been alone he would have died very shortly, but his faithful squire was close at hand, and carried his master off to the wood where the rest of his escort were waiting for him. His wounds were bound up, and some poles were cut to make a rough litter, and, almost unconscious, the emperor was borne away out of his enemy's country to his own palace.

All this time the princess was feeling very anxious. She had been whiling away the hours before this meeting by playing with a little pet monkey, which had been making such funny faces that, in spite of her troubles, she had burst into the hearty laugh overheard by the emperor. But by-and-by she grew restless, waiting for the signal which never came, and, had she dared, would certainly have rebelled when her gaoler, whom she believed to be fast asleep, ordered her to go to bed at once.

A fortnight passed, which was spent in great anxiety by the poor girl, who grew thin and weak with the uncertainty. At the end of this period, when the nurse went to her room one morning as usual in order to write her daily report, she carelessly left the key in the door. This was perceived by the princess, who turned it upon her so quickly and quietly that she never found out she was locked in till she had finished writing, and got up to seek her charge.

Finding herself free, the princess flew to the window, and to her horror saw the arrows lying about amongst the bloodstained brambles. Distracted with terror she slipped down the stairs and out of the tower, and ran for some time along a path, when with great good luck she met the husband of her own nurse, who had only just heard of her imprisonment, and was on his way to try to find out whether he could serve her. The princess begged him to get her some men's clothes while she awaited him in a little wood close by. The good man was overjoyed to be of use, and started at once for the

a moment her grief was so great that she nearly betrayed herself. Then, calling all her courage to her aid, she announced that she was a doctor, and that if they would leave him in her charge for a few days she would promise to cure him.

Now, in order to make a good appearance at court the new doctor resolved to have an entire suit made of pale blue satin. She bought the richest, most splendid stuff to be had in the shops, and summoned a tailor to make it for her, engaging to pay him double if he would finish the work in two hours. Next she went to the market, where she bought a fine mule, bidding her servant see that its harness was adorned with trappings of blue satin also.

Whilst all was being made ready the princess asked the woman in whose house she lived whether she knew any of the emperor's attendants, and found to her satisfaction that her cousin was his majesty's chief valet. The doctor then bade the woman inform everyone she met that on hearing of the emperor's illness a celebrated surgeon had hastened to attend him, and had undertaken to cure him entirely; declaring himself prepared to be burnt alive in case of failure.

The good woman, who loved nothing better than a bit of gossip, hurried to the palace with her news. Her story did not lose in telling. The court physicians were very scornful about the new-comer, but the emperor's attendants remarked that as, in spite of their remedies, his majesty was dying before their eyes, there could be no harm in consulting this stranger.

So the lord chamberlain begged the young doctor to come and prescribe for the royal patient without delay; and the doctor sent a message at once, that he would do himself the honour to present himself at the palace, and he lost no time in mounting his mule and setting out. As the people and soldiers saw him ride past they cried out:

'Here comes the Satin Surgeon! Look at the Satin Surgeon! Long live the Satin Surgeon!' And, on arriving, he was announced by this name, and at once taken to the sick room of the dying man.

The emperor was lying with his eyes closed, and his face as white as the pillow itself; but directly he heard the new-comer's voice, he looked up and smiled, and signed that he wished the new doctor to remain near him. Making a low bow, the Satin Surgeon assured the emperor that he felt certain of curing his malady, but insisted that everyone should leave the room except the emperor's favourite equerry. He then dressed the wounds with the magic salve which the boy had given him, and it so relieved the emperor's pain that he slept soundly all that night.

When morning broke, the courtiers and doctors hurried to the emperor's chamber, and were much surprised to find him free of pain. But they were promptly ordered out of the room by the Satin Surgeon, who renewed the dressings with such good results that next morning the emperor was nearly well, and able to leave his bed. As he grew stronger, his thoughts dwelt more and more on the cause of all his sufferings, and his spirits grew worse as his health grew better. The face and voice of his new doctor reminded him of the princess who had, he imagined, betrayed him, and caused him such dreadful torture; and, unable to bear the thought, his eyes filled with tears.

The doctor noticed his sad countenance and did all he could to enliven his patient with cheerful talk and amusing stories, till at last he won the emperor's confidence and heard all the story of his love for a lady who had treated him cruelly, but whom, in spite of everything, he could not help loving. The Satin Surgeon listened with sympathy, and tried to persuade the emperor that possibly the princess was not so much to blame as might appear; but, eager though the sick man was to believe this, it took a long while to persuade him of it. At length a day came when the emperor was nearly well, and for the last time the doctor dressed the wounds with the precious salve. Then, both patient and surgeon, being wearied out with something they could not explain, fell asleep and slept for hours.

Early next morning, the princess, having decided to resume her own clothes which she had brought with her in a bag, dressed herself with great care and put on all her jewels so as to make herself look as lovely as possible. She had just finished when the emperor awoke, feeling so strong and well that he thought he must be dreaming, nor could he believe himself to be awake when he saw the princess draw aside his curtains.

For some minutes they gazed at each other, unable to speak, and then they only uttered little gasps of joy and thankfulness. By-and-by the princess told him the whole story of her adventures since their last interview at the Desert Tower; and the emperor, weak as he was, threw himself at her feet with vows of love and gratitude, without ever giving a thought to the fact that the household and court physicians were awaiting their summons in the ante-room.

The emperor, anxious to prove how much he owed to the Satin Surgeon, opened his door himself, and great was everyone's surprise and joy at seeing him in such perfect health. Like good courtiers, they hastened in to praise and compliment the Satin Surgeon, but what was their astonishment on finding that he had disappeared, leaving in his place the loveliest princess in the whole world.

'Whilst thanking the surgeon for his miraculous cure, you might at the same time do homage to your empress,' observed the emperor. He wished to have the marriage celebrated the same day, but the princess declared that she must wait to get her father's permission first.

Messengers were therefore instantly despatched to the neighbouring capital, and soon returned with the king's consent, for he had lately discovered all the mischief caused by his elder daughter.

The spiteful princess was so furious at the failure of her plans that she took to her bed, and died in a fit of rage and jealousy. No one grieved for her, and the king, being tired of the fatigues of government, gave up his crown to his younger daughter; so the two kingdoms henceforth became one.

[From the *Cabinet des Fées.*]

THE BILLY GOAT AND THE KING

Once there lived a certain king who understood the language of all birds and beasts and insects. This knowledge had of course been given him by a fairy godmother; but it was rather a troublesome present, for he knew that if he were ever to reveal anything he had thus learned he would turn into a stone. How he managed to avoid doing so long before this story opens I cannot say, but he had safely grown up to manhood, and married a wife, and was as happy as monarchs generally are.

This king, I must tell you, was a Hindu; and when a Hindu eats his food he has a nice little place on the ground freshly plastered with mud, and he sits in the middle of it with very few clothes on—which is quite a different way from ours.

Well, one day the king was eating his dinner in just such a nice, clean, mud-plastered spot, and his wife was sitting opposite to wait upon him and keep him company. As he ate he dropped some grains of rice upon the ground, and a little ant, who was running about seeking a living, seized upon one of the grains and bore it off towards his hole. Just outside the king's circle this ant met another ant, and the king heard the second one say:

'Oh, dear friend, do give me that grain of rice, and get another one for yourself. You see my boots are so dirty that, if I were to go upon the king's eating place, I should defile it, and I can't do that, it would be so very rude.'

P 2

But the owner of the grain of rice only replied:

'If you want rice go and get it. No one will notice your dirty boots; and you don't suppose that I am going to carry rice for all our kindred?'

Then the king laughed.

The queen looked at herself up and down, but she could not see or feel anything in her appearance to make the king laugh, so she said:

'What are you laughing at?'

'Did I laugh?' replied the king.

'Of course you did,' retorted the queen; 'and if you think that I am ridiculous I wish you would say so, instead of behaving in that stupid way! What are you laughing at?'

'I'm not laughing at anything,' answered the king.

'Very well, but you *did* laugh, and I want to know why.'

'Well, I'm afraid I can't tell you,' said the king.

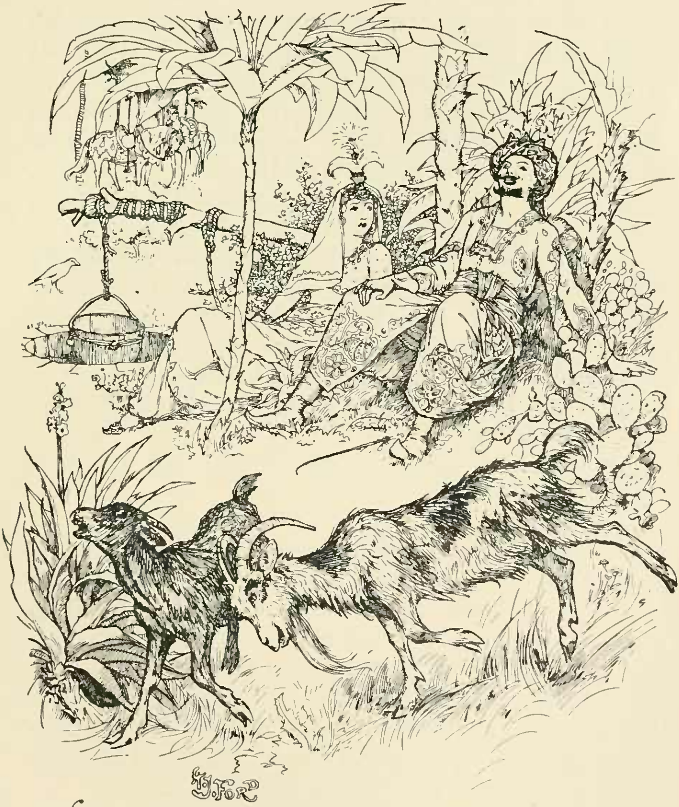
'You *must* tell me,' replied the queen impatiently. 'If you laugh when there's nothing to laugh at you must be ill or mad. What is the matter?'

Still the king refused to say, and still the queen declared that she must and would know. For days the quarrel went on, and the queen gave her husband no rest, until at last the poor man was almost out of his wits, and thought that, as life had become for him hardly worth living while this went on, he might as well tell her the secret and take the consequences.

'But,' thought he, 'if I am to become a stone, I am not going to lie, if I can help it, on some dusty highway, to be kicked here and there by man and beast, flung at dogs, be used as the plaything of naughty children, and become generally restless and miserable. I will be a stone at the bottom of the cool river, and roll gently about there until I find some secure resting-place where I can stay for ever.'

So he told his wife that if she would ride with him to the middle of the river he would tell her what he had laughed at. She thought he was joking, and laughingly agreed; their horses were ordered and they set out.

On the way they came to a fine well beneath the shade of some lofty, wide-spreading trees, and the king proposed that they should get off and rest a little, drink some of the cool water, and then pass on. To this the queen



The King laughs at the Billygoat

consented; so they dismounted and sat down in the shade by the well-side to rest.

It happened that an old goat and his wife were browsing in the neighbourhood, and, as the king and queen sat there, the nanny goat came to the well's brink and peering over saw some lovely green leaves that sprang in tender shoots out of the side of the well.

'Oh!' cried she to her husband, 'come quickly and look. Here are some leaves which make my mouth water; come and get them for me!'

Then the billy goat sauntered up and looked over, and after that he eyed his wife a little crossly.

'You expect me to get you those leaves, do you? I suppose you don't consider how in the world I am to reach them? You don't seem to think at all; if you did you would know that if I tried to reach those leaves I should fall into the well and be drowned!'

'Oh,' cried the nanny goat, 'why should you fall in? Do try and get them!'

'I am not going to be so silly,' replied the billy goat.

But the nanny goat still wept and entreated.

'Look here,' said her husband, 'there are plenty of fools in the world, but I am not one of them. This silly king here, because he can't cure his wife of asking questions, is going to throw his life away. But I know how to cure you of your follies, and I'm going to.'

And with that he butted the nanny goat so severely that in two minutes she was submissively feeding somewhere else, and had made up her mind that the leaves in the well were not worth having.

Then the king, who had understood every word, laughed once more.

The queen looked at him suspiciously, but the king got up and walked across to where she sat.

'Are you still determined to find out what I was laughing at the other day?' he asked.

'Quite,' answered the queen angrily.

'Because,' said the king, tapping his leg with his riding whip, 'I've made up my mind not to tell you, and moreover, I have made up my mind to stop you mentioning the subject any more.'

'What *do* you mean?' asked the queen nervously.

'Well,' replied the king, 'I notice that if that goat is displeased with his wife, he just butts her, and that seems to settle the question——'

'Do you mean to say you would *beat* me?' cried the queen.

'I should be extremely sorry to have to do so,' replied the king; 'but I have to persuade you to go home quietly, and to ask no more silly questions when I say I cannot answer them. Of course, if you *will* persist, why——'

And the queen went home, and so did the king; and it is said that they are both happier and wiser than ever before.

[Punjâbi story, Major Campbell, Ferosbepore.]

THE STORY OF ZOULVISIA

In the midst of a sandy desert, somewhere in Asia, the eyes of travellers are refreshed by the sight of a high mountain covered with beautiful trees, among which the glitter of foaming waterfalls may be seen in the sunlight. In that clear, still air it is even possible to hear the song of the birds, and smell of the flowers; but though the mountain is plainly inhabited—for here and there a white tent is visible—none of the kings or princes who pass it on the road to Babylon or Baalbec ever plunge into its forests—or, if they do, they never come back. Indeed, so great is the terror caused by the evil reputation of the mountain that fathers on their death-beds pray their sons never to try to fathom its mysteries. But in spite of its ill-fame, a certain number of young men every year announce their intention of visiting it and, as we have said, are never seen again.

Now there was once a powerful king who ruled over a country on the other side of the desert, and, when dying, gave the usual counsel to his seven sons. Hardly, however, was he dead than the eldest, who succeeded to the throne, announced his intention of hunting in the enchanted mountain. In vain the old men shook their heads and tried to persuade him to give up his mad scheme. All was useless; he went, but did not return; and in due time the throne was filled by his next brother.

And so it happened to the other five; but when the youngest became king, and he also proclaimed a hunt in the mountain, a loud lament was raised in the city.

'Who will reign over us when you are dead? For dead you surely will be,' cried they. 'Stay with us, and we will make you happy.' And for a while he listened to their prayers, and the land grew rich and prosperous under his rule. But in a few years the restless fit again took possession of him, and this time he would hear nothing. Hunt in that forest he would, and calling his friends and attendants round him, he set out one morning across the desert.

They were riding through a rocky valley, when a deer sprang up in front of them and bounded away. The king instantly gave chase, followed by his attendants; but the animal ran so swiftly that they never could get up to it, and at length it vanished in the depths of the forest.

Then the young man drew rein for the first time, and looked about him. He had left his companions far behind, and, glancing back, he beheld them entering some tents, dotted here and there amongst the trees. For himself, the fresh coolness of the woods was more attractive to him than any food, however delicious, and for hours he strolled about as his fancy led him.

By-and-by, however, it began to grow dark, and he thought that the moment had arrived for them to start for the palace. So, leaving the forest with a sigh, he made his way down to the tents, but what was his horror to find his men lying about, some dead, some dying. These were past speech, but speech was needless. It was as clear as day that the wine they had drunk contained deadly poison.

'I am too late to help you, my poor friends,' he said, gazing at them sadly; 'but at least I can avenge you! Those that have set the snare will certainly return to see to its working. I will hide myself somewhere, and discover who they are!'

Near the spot where he stood he noticed a large walnut tree, and into this he climbed. Night soon fell, and nothing broke the stillness of the place; but with the earliest glimpse of dawn a noise of galloping hoofs was heard.

Pushing the branches aside the young man beheld a youth approaching, mounted on a white horse. On reaching the tents the cavalier dismounted, and closely inspected the dead bodies that lay about them. Then, one by one, he dragged them to a ravine close by and threw them into a lake at the bottom. While he was doing this, the servants who had followed him led away the horses of the ill-fated men, and the courtiers were ordered to let loose the deer, which was used as a decoy, and to see that the tables in the tents were covered as before with food and wine.

Having made these arrangements he strolled slowly through the forest, but great was his surprise to come upon a beautiful horse hidden in the depths of a thicket.

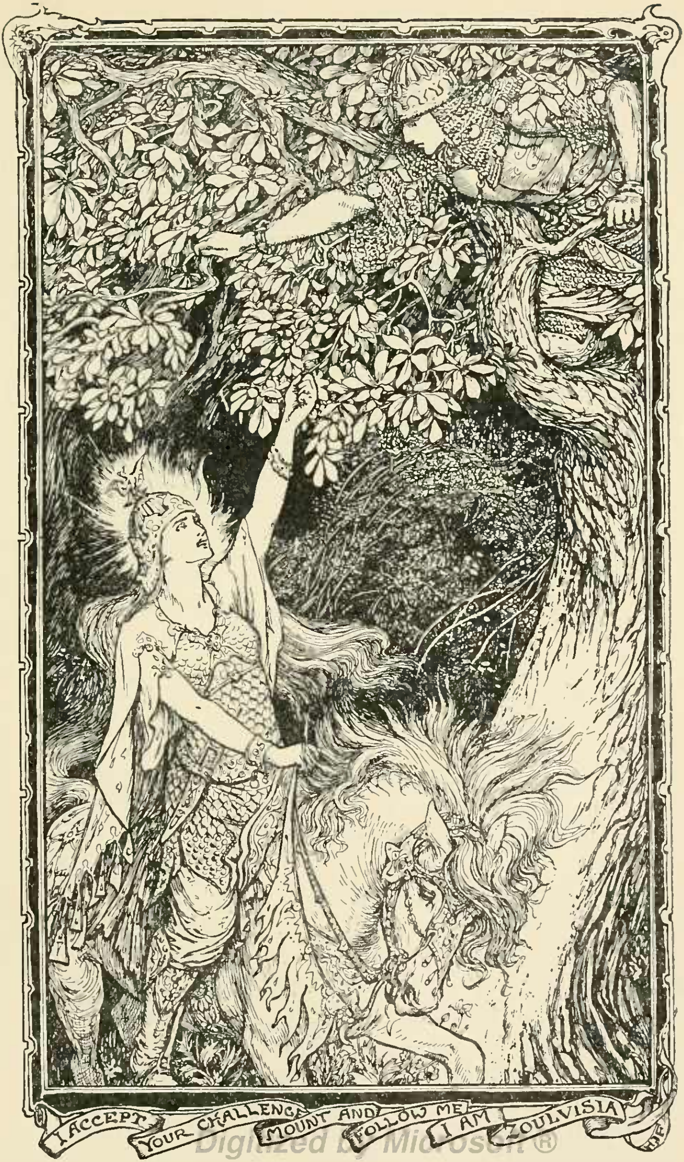
'There was a horse for every dead man,' he said to himself. 'Then whose is this?'

'Mine!' answered a voice from a walnut tree close by. 'Who are you that lure men into your power and then poison them? But you shall do so no longer. Return to your house, wherever it may be, and we will fight before it!'

The cavalier remained speechless with anger at these words; then with a great effort he replied:

'I accept your challenge. Mount, and follow me. I am Zoulvisia.' And, springing on his horse, he was out of sight so quickly that the king had only time to notice that light seemed to flow from himself and his steed, and that the hair under his helmet was like liquid gold.

Clearly, the cavalier was a woman. But who could she be? Was she queen of all the queens? Or was she chief of a band of robbers? She was neither: only a beautiful maiden.


I ACCEPT YOUR CHALLENGE MOUNT AND FOLLOW ME I AM ZOULVISIA
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Wrapped in these reflections, he remained standing beneath the walnut tree, long after horse and rider had vanished from sight. Then he awoke with a start, to remember that he must find the way to the house of his enemy, though where it was he had no notion. However, he took the path down which the rider had come, and walked along it for many hours till he came to three huts side by side, in each of which lived an old fairy and her sons.

The poor king was by this time so tired and hungry that he could hardly speak, but when he had drunk some milk, and rested a little, he was able to reply to the questions they eagerly put to him.

'I am going to seek Zoulvisia,' said he; 'she has slain my brothers and many of my subjects, and I mean to avenge them.'

He had only spoken to the inhabitants of one house, but from all three came an answering murmur.

'What a pity we did not know! Twice this day has she passed our door, and we might have kept her prisoner.'

But though their words were brave their hearts were not, for the mere thought of Zoulvisia made them tremble.

'Forget Zoulvisia, and stay with us,' they all said, holding out their hands; 'you shall be our big brother, and we will be your little brothers.' But the king would not.

Drawing from his pocket a pair of scissors, a razor and a mirror, he gave one to each of the old fairies, saying:

'Though I may not give up my vengeance I accept your friendship, and therefore leave you these three tokens. If blood should appear on the face of either know that my life is in danger, and, in memory of our sworn brotherhood, come to my aid.'

'We will come,' they answered. And the king mounted his horse and set out along the road they showed him.

By the light of the moon he presently perceived a splendid palace, but, though he rode twice round it, he could find no door. He was considering what he should do next, when he heard the sound of loud snoring, which seemed to come from his feet. Looking down, he beheld an old man lying at the bottom of a deep pit, just outside the walls, with a lantern by his side.

'Perhaps *he* may be able to give me some counsel,' thought the king; and, with some difficulty, he scrambled into the pit and laid his hand on the shoulder of the sleeper.

'Are you a bird or a snake that you can enter here?' asked the old man, awaking with a start. But the king answered that he was a mere mortal, and that he sought Zoulvisia.

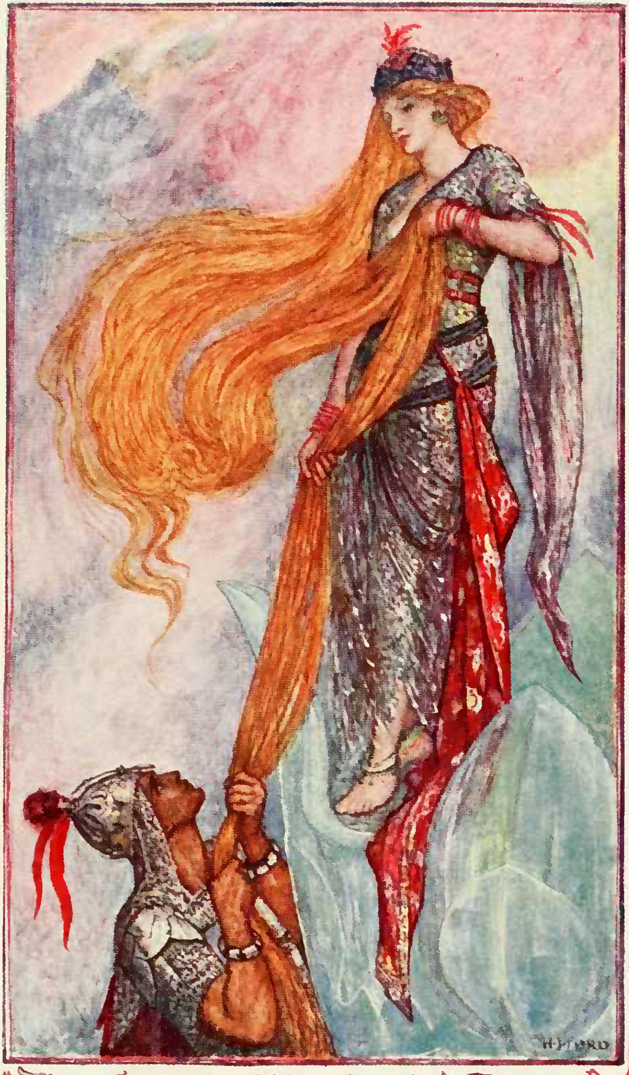
'Zoulvisia? The world's curse?' replied he, gnashing his teeth. 'Out of all the thousands she has slain I am the only one who has escaped, though why she spared me only to condemn me to this living death I cannot guess.'

'Help me if you can,' said the king. And he told the old man his story, to which he listened intently.

'Take heed then to my counsel,' answered the old man. 'Know that every day at sunrise Zoulvisia dresses herself in her jacket of pearls, and mounts the steps of her crystal watch-tower. From there she can see all over her lands, and behold the entrance of either man or demon. If so much as one is detected she utters such fearful cries that those who hear her die of fright. But hide yourself in a cave that lies near the foot of the tower, and plant a forked stick in front of it; then, when she has uttered her third cry, go forth boldly, and look up at the tower. And go without fear, for you will have broken her power.'

Word for word the king did as the old man had

ZOULVISIA



The Ascent of the Crystal Tower

bidden him, and when he stepped forth from the cave, their eyes met.

'You have conquered me,' said Zoulvisia, 'and are worthy to be my husband, for you are the first man who has not died at the sound of my voice!' And letting down her golden hair, she drew up the king to the summit of the tower as with a rope. Then she led him into the hall of audience, and presented him to her household.

'Ask of me what you will, and I will grant it to you,' whispered Zoulvisia with a smile, as they sat together on a mossy bank by the stream. And the king prayed her to set free the old man to whom he owed his life, and to send him back to his own country.

'I have finished with hunting, and with riding about my lands,' said Zoulvisia, the day that they were married. 'The care of providing for us all belongs henceforth to you.' And turning to her attendants, she bade them bring the horse of fire before her.

'This is your master, O my steed of flame,' cried she; 'and you will serve him as you have served me.' And kissing him between his eyes, she placed the bridle in the hand of her husband.

The horse looked for a moment at the young man, and then bent his head, while the king patted his neck and smoothed his tail, till they felt themselves old friends. After this he mounted to do Zoulvisia's bidding, but before he started she gave him a case of pearls containing one of her hairs, which he tucked into the breast of his coat.

He rode along for some time, without seeing any game to bring home for dinner. Suddenly a fine stag started up almost under his feet, and he at once gave chase. On they sped, but the stag twisted and turned so that the king had no chance of a shot till they reached a broad river, when the animal jumped in and swam across. The king fitted his cross-bow with a bolt, and took aim, but though he succeeded in wounding the stag, it contrived to gain the opposite bank, and in his excitement he never observed that the case of pearls had fallen into the water.

The stream, though deep, was likewise rapid, and the box was swirled along miles, and miles, and miles, till it was washed up in quite another country. Here it was picked up by one of the water-carriers belonging to the palace, who showed it to the king. The workmanship of the case was so curious, and the pearls so rare, that the king could not make up his mind to part with it, but he gave the man a good price and sent him away. Then, summoning his chamberlain, he bade him find out its history in three days, or lose his head.

But the answer to the riddle, which puzzled all the magicians and wise men, was given by an old woman, who came up to the palace and told the chamberlain that, for two handfuls of gold, she would reveal the mystery.

Of course the chamberlain gladly gave her what she asked, and in return she informed him that the case and the hair belonged to Zoulvisia.

'Bring her hither, old crone, and you shall have gold enough to stand up in,' said the chamberlain. And the old woman answered that she would try what she could do.

She went back to her hut in the middle of the forest, and standing in the door-way, whistled softly. Soon the dead leaves on the ground began to move and to rustle, and from underneath them there came a long train of serpents. They wriggled to the feet of the witch, who stooped down and patted their heads, and gave each one some milk in a red earthen basin. When they had all finished, she whistled again, and bade two or three coil themselves round her arms and neck, while she turned one into a cane and another into a whip. Then she took a stick, and on the river bank changed it into a raft, and seating herself comfortably, she pushed off into the centre of the stream.

All that day she floated, and all the next night, and towards sunset the following evening she found herself close to Zoulvisia's garden, just at the moment that the king, on the horse of flame, was returning from hunting.

'Who are you?' he asked in surprise; for old women travelling on rafts were not common in that country. 'Who are you, and why have you come here?'

'I am a poor pilgrim, my son,' answered she, 'and having missed the caravan, I have wandered foodless for many days through the desert, till at length I reached the river. There I found this tiny raft, and to it I committed myself, not knowing if I should live or die. But since you have found me, give me, I pray you, bread to eat, and let me lie this night by the dog who guards your door!'

This piteous tale touched the heart of the young man, and he promised that he would bring her food, and that she should pass the night in his palace.

'But mount behind me, good woman,' cried he, 'for you have walked far, and it is still a long way to the palace.' And as he spoke he bent down to help her, but the horse swerved on one side.

And so it happened twice and thrice, and the old witch guessed the reason, though the king did not.

'I fear to fall off,' said she; 'but as your kind heart pities my sorrows, ride slowly, and lame as I am, I think I can manage to keep up.'

At the door he bade the witch to rest herself, and he would fetch her all she needed. But Zoulvisia his wife grew pale when she heard whom he had brought, and besought him to feed the old woman and send her away, as she would cause mischief to befall them.

The king laughed at her fears, and answered lightly:

'Why, one would think she was a witch to hear you talk! And even if she were, what harm could she do to us?' And calling to the maidens he bade them carry her food, and to let her sleep in their chamber.

Now the old woman was very cunning, and kept the maidens awake half the night with all kinds of strange stories. Indeed, the next morning, while they were dressing their mistress, one of them suddenly broke into a laugh, in which the others joined her.

'What is the matter with you?' asked Zoulvisia. And the maid answered that she was thinking of a droll adventure told them the evening before by the new-comer.

'And, oh, madam!' cried the girl, 'it may be that she is a witch, as they say; but I am sure she never would work a spell to harm a fly! And as for her tales, they would pass many a dull hour for you, when my lord was absent!'

So, in an evil hour, Zoulvisia consented that the crone should be brought to her, and from that moment the two were hardly ever apart.

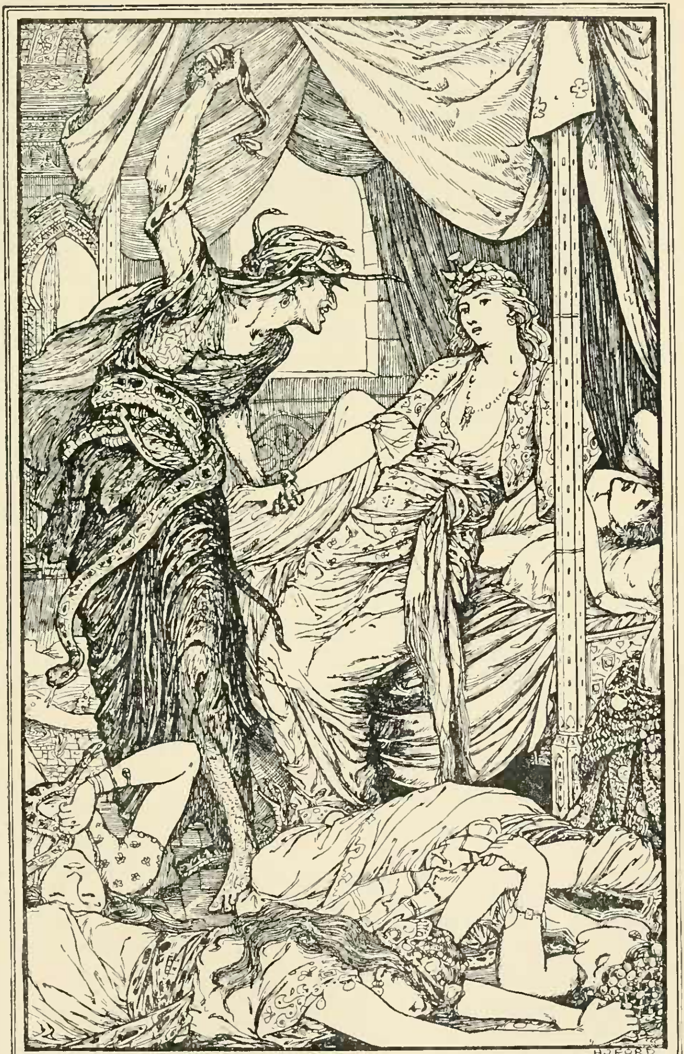
One day the witch began to talk about the young king, and to declare that in all the lands she had visited she had seen none like him.

'It was so clever of him to guess your secret so as to win your heart,' said she. 'And of course he told you his, in return?'

'No, I don't think he has got any,' returned Zoulvisia.

'Not got any secrets?' cried the old woman scornfully. 'That is nonsense! Every man has a secret, which he always tells to the woman he loves. And if he has not told it to *you*, it is that he does not love you!'

These words troubled Zoulvisia mightily, though she would not confess it to the witch. But the next time



The Witch and her Snakes

she found herself alone with her husband, she began to coax him to tell her in what lay the secret of his strength. For a long while he put her off with caresses, but when she would be no longer denied, he answered:

'It is my sabre that gives me strength, and day and night it lies by my side. But now that I have told you, swear upon this ring, that I will give you in exchange for yours, that you will reveal it to nobody.' And Zoulvisia swore; and instantly hastened to betray the great news to the old woman.

Four nights later, when all the world was asleep, the witch softly crept into the king's chamber and took the sabre from his side as he lay sleeping. Then, opening her lattice, she flew on to the terrace and dropped the sword into the river.

The next morning everyone was surprised because the king did not, as usual, rise early and go off to hunt. The attendants listened at the keyhole and heard the sound of heavy breathing, but none dared enter, till Zoulvisia pushed past. And what a sight met their gaze! There lay the king almost dead, with foam on his mouth, and eyes that were already closed. They wept, and they cried to him, but no answer came.

Suddenly a shriek broke from those who stood hindmost, and in strode the witch, with serpents round her neck and arms and hair. At a sign from her they flung themselves with a hiss upon the maidens, whose flesh was pierced with their poisonous fangs. Then turning to Zoulvisia, she said:

'I give you your choice—will you come with me, or shall the serpents slay you also?' And as the terrified girl stared at her, unable to utter one word, she seized her by the arm and led her to the place where the raft was hidden among the rushes. When they were both on board she took the oars, and they floated down the stream till they had reached the neighbouring country, where Zoulvisia was sold for a sack of gold to the king.

Now, since the young man had entered the three huts on his way through the forest, not a morning had passed without the sons of the three fairies examining the scissors, the razor and the mirror, which the young king had left them. Hitherto the surfaces of all three things had been bright and undimmed, but on this particular morning, when they took them out as usual, drops of blood stood on the razor and the scissors, while the little mirror was clouded over.

'Something terrible must have happened to our little brother,' they whispered to each other, with awe-struck faces; 'we must hasten to his rescue ere it be too late.' And putting on their magic slippers they started for the palace.

The servants greeted them eagerly, ready to pour forth all they knew, but that was not much; only that the sabre had vanished, none knew where. The new-comers passed the whole of the day in searching for it, but it could not be found, and when night closed in, they were very tired and hungry. But how were they to get food? The king had not hunted that day, and there was nothing for them to eat. The little men were in despair, when a ray of the moon suddenly lit up the river beneath the walls.

'How stupid! Of course there are fish to catch,' cried they; and running down to the bank they soon succeeded in landing some fine fish, which they cooked on the spot. Then they felt better, and began to look about them.

Further out, in the middle of the stream, there was a strange splashing, and by-and-by the body of a huge fish appeared, turning and twisting as if in pain. The eyes of all the brothers were fixed on the spot, when the fish leapt in the air, and a bright gleam flashed through the night. 'The sabre!' they shouted, and plunged into the stream, and with a sharp tug, pulled out the sword, while the fish lay on the water, exhausted by its struggles.

Swimming back with the sabre to land, they carefully dried it in their coats, and then carried it to the palace and placed it on the king's pillow. In an instant colour came back to the waxen face, and the hollow cheeks filled out. The king sat up, and opening his eyes he said:

'Where is Zoulvisia?'

'That is what we do not know,' answered the little men; 'but now that you are saved you will soon find out.' And they told him what had happened since Zoulvisia had betrayed his secret to the witch.

'Let me go to my horse,' was all he said. But when he entered the stable he could have wept at the sight of his favourite steed, which was nearly in as sad a plight as his master had been. Languidly he turned his head as the door swung back on its hinges, but when he beheld the king he rose up, and rubbed his head against him.

'Oh, my poor horse! How much cleverer were you than I! If I had acted like you I should never have lost Zoulvisia; but we will seek her together, you and I.'

For a long while the king and his horse followed the course of the stream, but nowhere could he learn anything of Zoulvisia. At length, one evening, they both stopped to rest by a cottage not far from a great city, and as the king was lying outstretched on the grass, lazily watching his horse cropping the short turf, an old woman came out with a wooden bowl of fresh milk, which she offered him.

He drank it eagerly, for he was very thirsty, and then laying down the bowl, began to talk to the woman, who was delighted to have someone to listen to her conversation.

'You are in luck to have passed this way just now,' said she, 'for in five days the king holds his wedding banquet. Ah! but the bride is unwilling, for all her blue eyes and her golden hair! And she keeps by her side a cup of poison, and declares that she will swallow it rather than become his wife. Yet he is a handsome man too, and a proper husband for her—more than she could have looked for, having come no one knows whither, and bought from a witch——'

The king started. Had he found her after all? His heart beat violently, as if it would choke him; but he gasped out:

'Is her name Zoulvisia?'

'Ay, so she says, though the old witch—— But what ails you?' she broke off, as the young man sprang to his feet and seized her wrists.

'Listen to me,' he said. 'Can you keep a secret?'

'Ay,' answered the old woman again, 'if I am paid for it.'

'Oh, you shall be paid, never fear—as much as your heart can desire! Here is a handful of gold: you shall have as much again if you will do my bidding.' The old crone nodded her head.

'Then go and buy a dress such as ladies wear at court, and manage to get admitted into the palace, and into the presence of Zoulvisia. When there, show her this ring, and after that she will tell you what to do.'

So the old woman set off, and clothed herself in a garment of yellow silk, and wrapped a veil closely round her head. In this dress she walked boldly up the palace steps behind some merchants whom the king had sent for to bring presents for Zoulvisia.

At first the bride would have nothing to say to any of them; but on perceiving the ring, she suddenly grew as meek as a lamb. And thanking the merchants for their trouble, she sent them away, and remained alone with her visitor.

'Grandmother,' asked Zoulvisia, as soon as the door was safely shut, 'where is the owner of this ring?'

'In my cottage,' answered the old woman, 'waiting for orders from you.'

'Tell him to remain there for three days; and now go to the king of this country, and say that you have succeeded in bringing me to reason. Then he will let me alone and will cease to watch me. On the third day from this I shall be wandering about the garden near the river, and there your guest will find me. The rest concerns myself only.'

The morning of the third day dawned, and with the first rays of the sun a bustle began in the palace; for that evening the king was to marry Zoulvisia. Tents were being erected of fine scarlet cloth, decked with wreaths of sweet-smelling white flowers, and in them the banquet was spread. When all was ready a procession was formed to fetch the bride, who had been wandering in the palace gardens since daylight, and crowds lined the way to see her pass. A glimpse of her dress of golden gauze might be caught, as she passed from one flowery thicket to another; then suddenly the multitude swayed, and shrank back, as a thunderbolt seemed to flash out of the sky to the place where Zoulvisia was standing. Ah! but it was no thunderbolt, only the horse of fire! And when the people looked again, it was bounding away with two persons on its back.

Zoulvisia and her husband both learnt how to keep happiness when they had got it; and *that* is a lesson that many men and women never learn at all. And besides, it is a lesson which nobody can teach, and that every boy and girl must learn for themselves.

[From *Contes Arméniens*. Par Louis Macler.]

GRASP ALL, LOSE ALL

Once, in former times, there lived in a certain city in India a poor oil-seller, called Déna, who never could keep any money in his pockets; and when this story begins he had borrowed from a banker, of the name of Léna, the sum of one hundred rupees; which, with the interest Léna always charged, amounted to a debt of three hundred rupees. Now Déna was doing a very bad business, and had no money with which to pay his debt, so Léna was very angry, and used to come round to Déna's house every evening and abuse him until the poor man was nearly worried out of his life. Léna generally fixed his visit just when Déna's wife was cooking the evening meal, and would make such a scene that the poor oil-seller and his wife and daughter quite lost their appetites, and could eat nothing. This went on for some weeks, till, one day, Déna said to himself that he could stand it no longer, and that he had better run away; and, as a man cannot fly easily with a wife and daughter, he thought he must leave them behind. So that evening, instead of turning into his house as usual after his day's work, he just slipped out of the city without knowing very well where he was going.

At about ten o'clock that night Déna came to a well by the wayside, near which grew a giant peepul tree; and, as he was very tired, he determined to climb it, and rest for a little before continuing his journey in the morning. Up he went and curled himself so comfortably amongst the great branches that, overcome with weariness, he fell fast asleep. Whilst he slept, some spirits, who roam about such places on certain nights, picked up the tree and flew away with it to a far-away shore where no creature lived, and there, long before the sun rose, they set it down. Just then the oil-seller awoke; but instead of finding himself in the midst of a forest, he was amazed to behold nothing but waste shore and wide sea, and was dumb with horror and astonishment. Whilst he sat up, trying to collect his senses, he began to catch sight here and there of twinkling, flashing lights, like little fires, that moved and sparkled all about, and wondered what they were. Presently he saw one so close to him that he reached out his hand and grasped it, and found that it was a sparkling red stone, scarcely smaller than a walnut. He opened a corner of his loin-cloth and tied the stone in it; and by-and-by he got another, and then a third, and a fourth, all of which he tied up carefully in his cloth. At last, just as day was breaking, the tree rose, and, flying rapidly through the air, was deposited once more by the well where it had stood the previous evening.

When Déna had recovered a little from the fright which the extraordinary antics of the tree had caused him, he began to thank Providence that he was alive, and, as his love of wandering had been quite cured, he made his way back to the city and to his own house. Here he was met and soundly scolded by his wife, who assailed him with a hundred questions and reproaches. As soon as she paused for breath, Déna replied:

'I have only this one thing to say, just look what I have got!' And, after carefully shutting all the doors, he opened the corner of his loin-cloth and showed her the four stones, which glittered and flashed as he turned them over and over.

'Pooh!' said his wife, 'the silly pebbles! If it was something to eat, now, there'd be some sense in them; but what's the good of *such* things?' And she turned away with a sniff, for it had happened that the night before, when Léna had come round as usual to storm at Déna, he had been rather disturbed to find that his victim was from home, and had frightened the poor woman by his threats. Directly, however, he heard that Déna had come back, Léna appeared in the doorway. For some minutes he talked to the oil-seller at the top of his voice, until he was tired, then Déna said:

'If your honour would deign to walk into my humble dwelling, I will speak.'

So Léna walked in, and the other, shutting as before all the doors, untied the corner of his loin-cloth and showed him the four great flashing stones.

'This is all,' said he, 'that I have in the world to set against my debt, for, as your honour knows, I haven't a penny, but the stones are pretty!'

Now Léna looked and saw at once that these were magnificent rubies, and his mouth watered for them; but as it would never do to show what was in his mind, he went on:

'What do I care about your stupid stones? It is my money I want, my lawful debt which you owe me, and I shall get it out of you yet somehow or another, or it will be the worse for you.'

To all his reproaches Déna could answer nothing, but sat with his hands joined together beseechingly, asking for patience and pity. At length Léna pretended that, rather than have a bad debt on his hand, he would be at the loss of taking the stones in lieu of his money; and, whilst Déna nearly wept with gratitude, he wrote out a receipt for the three hundred rupees; and, wrapping the four stones in a cloth, he put them into his bosom, and went off to his house.

'How shall I turn these rubies into money?' thought Léna, as he walked along; 'I daren't keep them, for they are of great value, and if the rajah heard that I had them he would probably put me into prison on some pretence and seize the stones and all else that I have as well. But what a bargain I have got! Four rubies worth a king's ransom, for one hundred rupees! Well, well, I must take heed not to betray my secret.' And he went on making plans. Presently he made up his mind what to do, and, putting on his cleanest clothes, he set off to the house of the chief wazir, whose name was Musli, and, after seeking a private audience, he brought out the four rubies and laid them before him.

The wazir's eyes sparkled as he beheld the splendid gems.

'Fine, indeed,' murmured he. 'I can't buy them at their real value; but, if you like to take it, I will give you ten thousand rupees for the four.'

To this the banker consented gratefully; and, handing over the stones in exchange for the rupees, he hurried home, thanking his stars that he had driven such a reasonable bargain and obtained such an enormous profit.

After Léna had departed the wazir began casting about in his mind what to do with the gems; and very soon determined that the best thing to do was to present them to the rajah, whose name was Kahré. Without losing a moment, he went that very day to the palace, and sought a private interview with the rajah; and when he found himself alone with his royal master, he brought the four jewels and laid them before him.

'Oh, ho!' said the rajah, 'these are priceless gems, and you have done well to give them to me. In return I give you and your heirs the revenues of ten villages.'

Now the wazir was overjoyed at these words, but only made his deepest obeisance; and, whilst the king put the rubies into his turban, hurried away beaming with happiness at the thought that for ten thousand rupees he had become lord of ten villages. The rajah was also equally pleased, and strolled off with his new purchases to the women's quarters and showed them to the queen, who was nearly out of her mind with delight. Then, as she turned them over and over in her hands, she said: 'Ah! if I had eight more such gems, what a necklace they would make! Get me eight more of them or I shall die!'

'Most unreasonable of women,' cried the rajah, 'where am I to get eight more such jewels as these? I gave ten villages for them, and yet you are not satisfied!'

'What does it matter?' said the rani; 'do you want me to die? Surely you can get some more where these came from?' And then she fell to weeping and wailing until the rajah promised that in the morning he would make arrangements to get some more such rubies, and that if she would be patient she should have her desire.

In the morning the rajah sent for the wazir, and said that he must manage to get eight more rubies like those he had brought him the day before, 'and if you don't I shall hang you,' cried the rajah, for he was very cross. The poor wazir protested in vain that he knew not where to seek them; his master would not listen to a word he said.

'You *must*,' said he; 'the rani shall not die for the want of a few rubies! Get more where those came from.'

The wazir left the palace, much troubled in mind, and bade his slaves bring Léna before him. 'Get me eight more such rubies as those you brought yesterday,' commanded the wazir, directly the banker was shown into his presence. 'Eight more, and be quick, or I am a dead man.'

'But how can I?' wailed Léna; 'rubies like those don't grow upon bushes!'

'Where did you get them from?' asked the wazir.

'From Déna, the oil-seller,' said the banker.

'Well, send for him and ask him where *he* got them,' answered the wazir. 'I am not going to hang for twenty Dénas!' And more slaves were sent to summon Déna.

When Déna arrived he was closely questioned, and then all three started to see the rajah, and to him Déna told the whole story.

'What night was it that you slept in the peepul tree?' demanded the rajah.

'I can't remember,' said Déna; 'but my wife will know.'

Then Déna's wife was sent for, and she explained that it was on the last Sunday of the new moon.

Now everyone knows that it is on the Sunday of the new moon that spirits have special power to play pranks upon mortals. So the rajah forbade them all, on pain of death, to say a word to anyone; and declared that, on the next Sunday of the new moon, they four—Kahré, Musli, Léna and Déna—would go and sit in the peepul tree and see what happened.

The days dragged on to the appointed Sunday, and that evening the four met secretly, and entered the forest. They had not far to go before they reached the peepul tree, into which they climbed as the rajah had planned. At midnight the tree began to sway, and presently it moved through the air.

'See, sire,' whispered Déna, 'the tree is flying!'

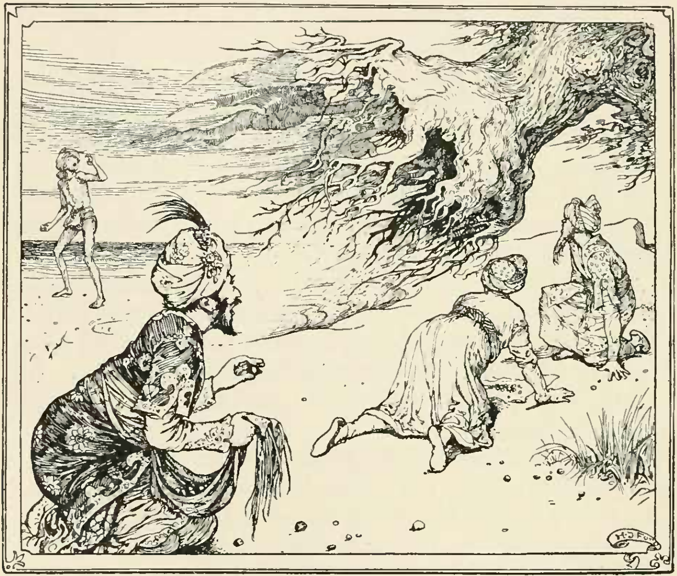
'Yes, yes,' said the rajah, 'you have told the truth. Now sit quiet, and we shall see what happens.'

Away and away flew the tree with the four men clinging tightly to its branches, until at last it was set down by the waste sea-shore where a great wide sea came tumbling in on a desert beach. Presently, as before, they began to see little points of light that glistened like fires all around them. Then Déna thought to himself:

'Think! last time I only took four that came close to me, and I got rid of all my debt in return. This time I will take all I can get and be rich!'

'If I got ten thousand rupees for four stones,' thought Léna, 'I will gather forty now for myself, and become so wealthy that they will probably make me a wazir at least!'

'For four stones I received ten villages,' Musli was silently thinking; 'now I will get stones enough to purchase a kingdom, become a rajah, and employ wazirs of my own!'



"suddenly the tree rose up again and flew away"

And Kahré thought: 'What is the good of only getting eight stones? Why, here are enough to make twenty necklaces; and wealth means power!'

Full of avarice and desire, each scrambled down from the tree, spread his cloth, and darted hither and thither picking up the precious jewels, looking the while over his shoulder to see whether his neighbour fared better than he. So engrossed were they in the business of gathering wealth that the dawn came upon them unawares; and suddenly the tree rose up again and flew away, leaving them upon the sea-shore staring after it, each with his cloth heavy with priceless jewels.

Morning broke in the city, and great was the consternation in the palace when the chamberlains declared that the rajah had gone out the evening before and had not returned.

'Ah!' said one, 'it is all right! Musli wazir will know where he is, for it was he who was the king's companion.'

Then they went to the wazir's house, and there they learnt that the wazir had left it the evening before and had not returned; 'but,' said a servant, 'Léna the banker will know where he is, for it was with him that Musli went.'

Then they visited the house of Léna, and there they learnt that the banker had gone out the evening before, and that he too had not returned; but the porter told them that he was accompanied by Déna the oil-seller, so he would know where they were.

So they departed to Déna's house, and Déna's wife met them with a torrent of reproaches and wailings, for Déna too had gone off the evening before to Léna's house and had not returned.

In vain they waited, and searched—never did any of the hapless four return to their homes; and the confused tale which was told by Déna's wife was the only clue to their fate.

To this day, in that country, when a greedy man has overreached himself, and lost all in grasping at too much, folks say:

'All has he lost!—neither Déna, nor Léna, nor Musli, nor Kahré remain.' And not five men in a hundred know how the proverb began, nor what it really signifies.

[Major Campbell, Feroshepore.]

THE FATE OF THE TURTLE

In a very hot country, far away to the east, was a beautiful little lake where two wild ducks made their home, and passed their days swimming and playing in its clear waters. They had it all to themselves, except for a turtle, who was many years older than they were, and had come there before them, and, luckily, instead of taking a dislike to the turtle, as so often happens when you have only one person to speak to, they became great friends, and spent most of the day in each other's company.

All went on smoothly and happily till one summer, when the rains failed and the sun shone so fiercely that every morning there was a little less water in the lake and a little more mud on the bank. The water-lilies around the edge began to droop, and the palms to hang their heads, and the ducks' favourite swimming place, where they could dive the deepest, to grow shallower and shallower. At length there came a morning when the ducks looked at each other uneasily, and before nightfall they had whispered that if at the end of two days rain had not come, they must fly away and seek a new home, for if they stayed in their old one, which they loved so much, they would certainly die of thirst.

Earnestly they watched the sky for many hours before they tucked their heads under their wings and fell asleep from sheer weariness, but not the tiniest cloud was to be seen covering the stars that shone so big and brilliant, and hung so low in the heavens that you felt as if you could touch them. So, when the morning broke, they made up their minds that they must go and tell the turtle of their plans, and bid him farewell.

They found him comfortably curled up on a pile of dead rushes, more than half asleep, for he was old, and could not venture out in the heat as he once used.

'Ah! here you are,' he cried; 'I began to wonder if I was ever going to see you again, for, somehow, though the lake has grown smaller, I seem to have grown weaker, and it is lonely spending all day and night by oneself!'

'Oh! my friend,' answered the elder of the two ducks, 'if you have suffered we have suffered also. Besides, I have something to tell you, that I fear will cause you greater pain still. If we do not wish to die of thirst we must leave this place at once, and seek another where the sun's rays do not come. My heart bleeds to say this, for there is nothing—nothing else in the world—which would have induced us to separate from you.'

The turtle was so astonished as well as so distressed at the duck's speech that for a moment he could find no words to reply. But when he had forced back his tears, he said in a shaky voice:

'How can you think that I am able to live without you, when for so long you have been my only friends? If you leave me, death will speedily put an end to my grief.'

'*Our* sorrow is as great as yours,' answered the other duck, 'but what can we do? And remember that if we are not here to drink the water, there will be the more for you! If it had not been for this terrible misfortune, be sure that nothing would have parted us from one whom we love so dearly.'

'My friends,' replied the turtle, 'water is as necessary to me as to you, and if death stares in your faces, it stares in mine also. But in the name of all the years we have passed together, do not, I beseech you, leave me to perish here alone! Wherever you may go take me with you!'

There was a pause. The ducks felt wretched at the thought of abandoning their old comrade, yet, at the same time, how could they grant his prayer? It seemed quite impossible, and at length one of them spoke:

'Oh, how can I find words to refuse?' cried he, 'yet how can we do what you ask? Consider that, like yours, our bodies are heavy and our feet small. Therefore, how could we walk with you over mountains and deserts, till we reached a land where the sun's rays no longer burn? Why, before the day was out we should all three be dead of fatigue and hunger! No, our only hope lies in our wings—and, alas! you cannot fly!'

'No, I cannot fly, of course,' answered the turtle, with a sigh. 'But you are so clever, and have seen so much of the world—surely you can think of some plan?' And he fixed his eyes eagerly on them. Now, when the ducks saw how ardently the turtle wished to accompany them their hearts were touched, and making a sign to their friend that they wished to be alone they swam out into the lake to consult together. Though he could not hear what they said, the turtle could watch, and the half-hour that their talk lasted felt to him like a hundred years. At length he beheld them returning side by side, and so great was his anxiety to know his fate he almost died from excitement before they reached him.

'We hope we have found a plan that may do for you,' said the big duck gravely, 'but we must warn you that it is not without great danger, especially if you are not careful to follow our directions.'

'How is it possible that I should not follow your directions when my life and happiness are at stake?' asked the turtle joyfully. 'Tell me what they are, and I will promise to obey them gratefully.'

'Well, then,' answered the duck, 'whilst we are carrying you through the air, in the manner that we have fixed upon, you must remain as quiet as if you were dead. However high above the earth you may find yourself, you must not feel afraid, nor move your feet nor open your mouth. No matter what you see or hear, it is absolutely needful for you to be perfectly still, or I cannot answer for the consequences.'

'I will be absolutely obedient,' answered the turtle, 'not only on this occasion but during all my life; and once more I promise faithfully not to move head or foot, to fear nothing, and never to speak a word during the whole journey.'

This being settled, the ducks swam about till they found, floating in the lake, a good stout stick. This they tied to their necks with some of the tough water-lily roots, and returned as quickly as they could to the turtle.

'Now,' said the elder duck, pushing the stick gently towards his friend, 'take this stick firmly in your mouth, and do not let it go till we have set you down on earth again.'

The turtle did as he was told, and the ducks in their turn seized the stick by the two ends, spread their wings and mounted swiftly into the air, the turtle hanging between them.

For a while all went well. They swept across valleys, over great mountains, above ruined cities, but no lake was to be seen anywhere. Still, the turtle had faith in his friends, and bravely hung on to the stick.

At length they saw in the distance a small village, and very soon they were passing over the roofs of the houses. The people were so astonished at the strange sight, that they all—men, women and children—ran out to see it, and cried to each other:

'Look! look! behold a miracle! Two ducks supporting a turtle! Was ever such a thing known before!' Indeed, so great was the surprise that men left their ploughing and women their weaving in order to add their voices to their friends'.

The ducks flew steadily on, heeding nothing of the commotion below; but not so the turtle. At first he kept silence, as he had been bidden to do, but at length the clamour below proved too much for him, and he began to think that everyone was envying him the power of travelling through the air. In an evil moment he forgot the promises he had made so solemnly, and opened his mouth to reply, but, before he could utter a word, he was rushing so swiftly through the air that he quickly became unconscious, and in this state was dashed to pieces against the side of a house. Then the ducks let fall after him the stick that had held up their friend, and which was of no further use. Sadly they looked at each other and shook their heads.

'We feared it would end so,' said they, 'yet, perhaps, he was right after all. Certainly this death was better than the one which awaited him.'

[From *Les Contes et Fables Indiennes.* Par M. Galland, 1724.]

THE SNAKE PRINCE

Once upon a time there lived by herself, in a city, an old woman who was desperately poor. One day she found that she had only a handful of flour left in the house, and no money to buy more nor hope of earning it. Carrying her little brass pot, very sadly she made her way down to the river to bathe and to obtain some water, thinking afterwards to come home and make herself an unleavened cake of what flour she had left; and after that she did not know what was to become of her.

Whilst she was bathing she left her little brass pot on the river bank covered with a cloth, to keep the inside nice and clean; but when she came up out of the river and took the cloth off to fill the pot with water, she saw inside it the glittering folds of a deadly snake. At once she popped the cloth again into the mouth of the pot and held it there; and then she said to herself:

'Ah, kind death! I will take thee home to my house, and there I will shake thee out of my pot and thou shalt bite me and I will die, and then all my troubles will be ended.'

With these sad thoughts in her mind the poor old woman hurried home, holding her cloth carefully in the mouth of the pot; and when she got home she shut all the doors and windows, and took away the cloth, and turned the pot upside down upon her hearthstone. What was her surprise to find that, instead of the deadly snake which she expected to see fall out of it, there fell out with a rattle and a clang a most magnificent necklace of flashing jewels!

For a few minutes she could hardly think or speak, but stood staring; and then with trembling hands she picked the necklace up, and folding it in the corner of her veil, she hurried off to the king's hall of public audience.

'A petition, O king!' she said. 'A petition for thy private ear alone!' And when her prayer had been granted, and she found herself alone with the king, she shook out her veil at his feet, and there fell from it in glittering coils the splendid necklace. As soon as the king saw it he was filled with amazement and delight; and the more he looked at it the more he felt that he must possess it at once. So he gave the old woman five hundred silver pieces for it, and put it straightway into his pocket. Away she went full of happiness; for the money that the king had given her was enough to keep her for the rest of her life.

As soon as he could leave his business the king hurried off and showed his wife his prize, with which she was as pleased as he, if not more so; and, as soon as they had finished admiring the wonderful necklace, they locked it up in the great chest where the queen's jewellery was kept, the key of which hung always round the king's neck.

A short while afterwards, a neighbouring king sent a message to say that a most lovely girl baby had been born to him; and he invited his neighbours to come to a great feast in honour of the occasion. The queen told her husband that of course they must be present at the banquet, and she would wear the new necklace which he had given her. They had only a short time to prepare for the journey, and at the last moment the king went to the jewel chest to take out the necklace for his wife to wear, but he could see no necklace at all, only, in its place, a fat little boy baby crowing and shouting. The king was so astonished that he nearly fell backwards, but presently he found his voice, and called for his wife so loudly that she came running, thinking that the necklace must at least have been stolen.

'Look here! look!' cried the king, 'haven't we always longed for a son? And now heaven has sent us one!'

'What do you mean?' cried the queen. 'Are you mad?'

'Mad? no, I hope not,' shouted the king, dancing in excitement round the open chest. 'Come here, and look! Look what we've got instead of that necklace!'

Just then the baby let out a great crow of joy, as though he would like to jump up and dance with the king; and the queen gave a cry of surprise, and ran up and looked into the chest.

'Oh!' she gasped, as she looked at the baby, 'what a darling! Where could he have come from?'

'I'm sure I can't say,' said the king; 'all I know is that we locked up a necklace in the chest, and when I unlocked it just now there was no necklace, but a baby, and as fine a baby as ever was seen.'

By this time the queen had the baby in her arms. 'Oh, the blessed one!' she cried, 'fairer ornament for the bosom of a queen than any necklace that ever was wrought. Write,' she continued, 'write to our neighbour and say that we cannot come to his feast, for we have a feast of our own, and a baby of our own! Oh, happy day!'

So the visit was given up; and, in honour of the new baby, the bells of the city, and its guns, and its trumpets, and its people, small and great, had hardly any rest for a week; there was such a ringing, and banging, and blaring, and such fireworks, and feasting, and rejoicing, and merry-making, as had never been seen before.

A few years went by; and, as the king's boy baby and his neighbour's girl baby grew and throve, the two kings arranged that as soon as they were old enough they should marry; and so, with much signing of papers and agreements, and wagging of wise heads, and stroking of grey beards, the compact was made, and signed, and sealed, and lay waiting for its fulfilment. And this too came to pass; for, as soon as the prince and princess were eighteen years of age, the kings agreed that it was time for the wedding; and the young prince journeyed away to the neighbouring kingdom for his bride, and was there married to her with great and renewed rejoicings.

Now, I must tell you that the old woman who had sold the king the necklace had been called in by him to be the nurse of the young prince; and although she loved her charge dearly, and was a most faithful servant, she could not help talking just a little, and so, by-and-by, it began to be rumoured that there was some magic about the young prince's birth; and the rumour of course had come in due time to the ears of the parents of the princess. So now that she was going to be the wife of the prince, her mother (who was curious, as many other people are) said to her daughter on the eve of the ceremony:

'Remember that the first thing you must do is to find out what this story is about the prince. And, in order to do it, you must not speak a word to him whatever he says until he asks you why you are silent; then you must ask him what the truth is about his magic birth; and until he tells you, you must not speak to him again.'

And the princess promised that she would follow her mother's advice.

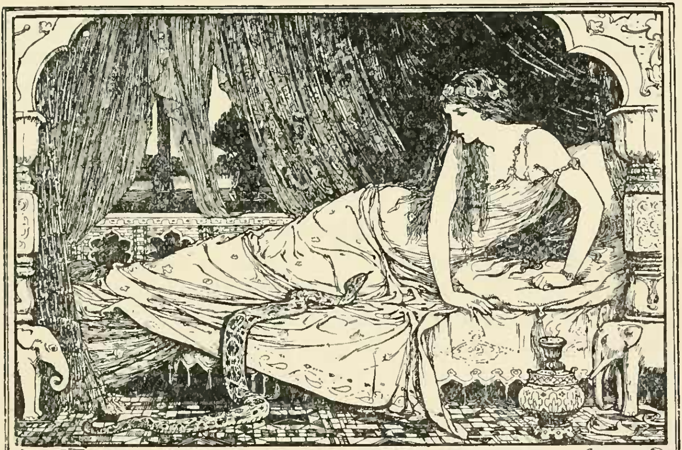
Therefore when they were married, and the prince spoke to his bride, she did not answer him. He could not think what was the matter, but even about her old home she would not utter a word. At last he asked why she would not speak; and then she said:

'Tell me the secret of your birth.'

Then the prince was very sad and displeased, and although she pressed him sorely he would not tell her, but always reply:

'If I tell you, you will repent that ever you asked me.'

For several months they lived together; and it was not such a happy time for either as it ought to have been, for the secret was still a secret, and lay between them like a cloud between the sun and the earth, making what should be fair, dull and sad.



The Snake Prince visits his wife

At length the prince could bear it no longer; so he said to his wife one day: 'At midnight I will tell you my secret if you still wish it; but you will repent it all your life.' However, the princess was overjoyed that she had succeeded, and paid no attention to his warnings.

That night the prince ordered horses to be ready for the princess and himself a little before midnight. He placed her on one, and mounted the other himself, and they rode together down to the river to the place where the old woman had first found the snake in her brass pot. There the prince drew rein and said sadly: 'Do you still insist that I should tell you my secret?' And the princess answered 'Yes.' 'If I do,' answered the prince, 'remember that you will regret it all your life.' But the princess only replied 'Tell me!'

'Then,' said the prince, 'know that I am the son of the king of a far country, but by enchantment I was turned into a snake.'

The word 'snake' was hardly out of his lips when he disappeared, and the princess heard a rustle and saw a ripple on the water; and in the faint moonlight she beheld a snake swimming into the river. Soon it disappeared and she was left alone. In vain she waited with beating heart for something to happen, and for the prince to come back to her. Nothing happened and no one came; only the wind mourned through the trees on the river bank, and the night birds cried, and a jackal howled in the distance, and the river flowed black and silent beneath her.

In the morning they found her, weeping and dishevelled, on the river bank; but no word could they learn from her or from anyone as to the fate of her husband. At her wish they built on the river bank a little house of black stone; and there she lived in mourning, with a few servants and guards to watch over her.

A long, long time passed by, and still the princess lived in mourning for her prince, and saw no one, and went nowhere away from her house on the river bank and the garden that surrounded it. One morning, when she woke up, she found a stain of fresh mud upon the carpet. She sent for the guards, who watched outside the house day and night, and asked them who had entered her room while she was asleep. They declared that no one *could* have entered, for they kept such careful watch that not even a bird could fly in without their knowledge; but none of them could explain the stain of mud. The next morning, again, the princess found another stain of wet mud, and she questioned everyone most carefully; but none could say how the mud came there. The third night the princess determined to lie awake herself and watch; and, for fear that she might fall asleep, she cut her finger with a penknife and rubbed salt into the cut, that the pain of it might keep her from sleeping. So she lay awake, and at midnight she saw a snake come wriggling along the ground with some mud from the river in its mouth; and when it came near the bed, it reared up its head and dropped its muddy head on the bedclothes. She was very frightened, but tried to control her fear, and called out:

'Who are you, and what do you here?'

And the snake answered:

'I am the prince, your husband, and I am come to visit you.'

Then the princess began to weep; and the snake continued:

'Alas! did I not say that if I told you my secret you would repent it? and have you not repented?'

'Oh, indeed!' cried the poor princess, 'I have repented it, and shall repent it all my life! Is there nothing I can do?'

And the snake answered:

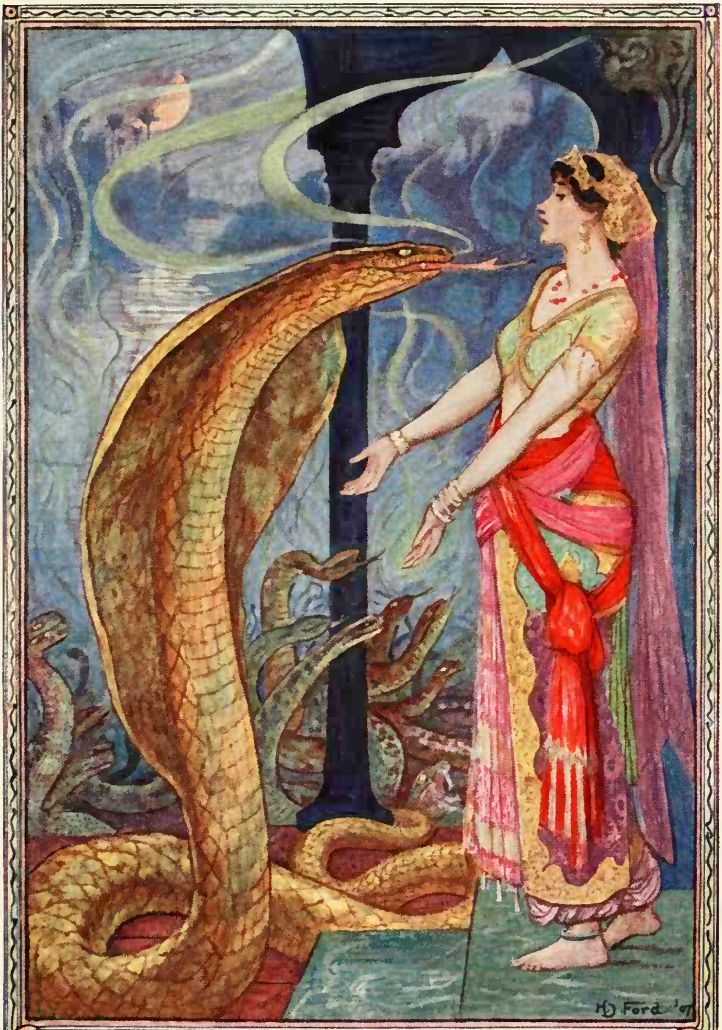
'Yes, there is one thing, if you dared to do it.'

'Only tell me,' said the princess, 'and I will do *anything*!'

'Then,' replied the snake, 'on a certain night you must put a large bowl of milk and sugar in each of the four corners of this room. All the snakes in the river will come out to drink the milk, and the one that leads the way will be the queen of the snakes. You must stand in her way at the door, and say: "Oh, Queen of Snakes, Queen of Snakes, give me back my husband!" and perhaps she will do it. But if you are frightened, and do not stop her, you will never see me again.' And he glided away.

On the night of which the snake had told her, the princess got four large bowls of milk and sugar, and put one in each corner of the room, and stood in the doorway waiting. At midnight there was a great hissing and rustling from the direction of the river, and presently the ground appeared to be alive with horrible writhing forms of snakes, whose eyes glittered and forked tongues quivered as they moved on in the direction of the princess's house. Foremost among them was a huge, repulsive scaly creature that led the dreadful procession. The guards were so terrified that they all ran away; but the princess stood in the doorway, as white as death, and with her hands clasped tight together for fear she should scream or faint, and fail to do her part. As they came closer and saw her in the way, all the snakes raised their horrid heads and swayed them to and fro, and looked at her with wicked beady eyes, while their breath seemed to poison the very air. Still the princess stood firm, and, when the leading snake was within a few feet of her, she cried: 'Oh, Queen of Snakes, Queen of Snakes, give me back my husband!' Then all the rustling, writhing crowd of snakes seemed to whisper to one another 'Her husband? her husband?' But the queen of snakes moved on until her head was almost in the princess's face, and her little eyes seemed to flash fire. And still the princess stood in the doorway and never moved, but cried again: 'Oh, Queen of Snakes, Queen of Snakes, give me back my husband!' Then the queen of snakes replied: 'To-morrow you shall have him—to-morrow!' When she heard these words and knew that she had conquered, the princess staggered from the door, and sank upon her bed and fainted. As in a dream, she saw that her room was full of snakes, all jostling and squabbling over the bowls of milk until it was finished. And then they went away.

In the morning the princess was up early, and took off the mourning dress which she had worn for five



QUEEN OF SNAKES GIVE ME BACK MY HUSBAND

whole years, and put on gay and beautiful clothes. And she swept the house and cleaned it, and adorned it with garlands and nosegays of sweet flowers and ferns, and prepared it as though she were making ready for her wedding. And when night fell she lit up the woods and gardens with lanterns, and spread a table as for a feast, and lit in the house a thousand wax candles. Then she waited for her husband, not knowing in what shape he would appear. And at midnight there came striding from the river the prince, laughing, but with tears in his eyes; and she ran to meet him, and threw herself into his arms, crying and laughing too.

So the prince came home; and the next day they two went back to the palace, and the old king wept with joy to see them. And the bells, so long silent, were set a-ringing again, and the guns firing, and the trumpets blaring, and there was fresh feasting and rejoicing.

And the old woman who had been the prince's nurse became nurse to the prince's children—at least she was called so; though she was far too old to do anything for them but love them. Yet she still thought that she was useful, and knew that she was happy. And happy, indeed, were the prince and princess, who in due time became king and queen, and lived and ruled long and prosperously.

[Major Campbell, Feroshepore.]

THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS IN THE FOREST

There were, once upon a time, a king and queen of Denmark who had an only son, a handsome and clever lad. When he was eighteen, his father, the old king, fell very ill, and there was no hope that he would ever get well again. The queen and the prince were very unhappy, for they loved him dearly; but though they did all they could, he only grew worse and worse, and, one day, when the summer had come and the birds were singing, he raised his head and, taking a long look out of the window, fell back dead.

During many weeks the queen could hardly eat or sleep, so sorely did she grieve for him, and the prince feared that she would die also if she went on weeping; so he begged her to go with him to a beautiful place that he knew of on the other side of the forest, and after some time she consented. The prince was overjoyed, and arranged that they should set off early next morning.

They travelled all day, only stopping now and then to rest, and already the queen began to be better and to take a little interest in the things she saw. Just as the evening was coming on they entered the forest. Here it was quite dark, for the trees grew so close together that the sun could not shine through them, and very soon they lost the path, and wandered helplessly about wondering what they should do.

'If we sleep in this dreadful place,' said the queen, who was tired and frightened, 'the wild beasts will eat us.' And she began to cry.

'Cheer up, mother,' answered her son, 'I have a feeling that luck is coming to us.' And at the next turning they came to a little house, in the window of which a light was burning.

'Didn't I tell you so?' cried the prince. 'Stay here a moment and I will go and see if I can get food and shelter for the night.' And away he ran as fast as he could go, for by this time they were very hungry, as they had brought very little food with them and had eaten up every scrap! When one takes a long journey on foot one does not like to have too much to carry.

The prince entered the house and looked about him, going from one room to the other, but seeing nobody and finding nothing to eat. At last, as he was going sorrowfully away, he caught sight of a sword and shirt of mail hanging on the wall in an inner room, with a piece of paper fastened under them. On the paper was some writing, which said that whoever wore the coat and carried the sword would be safe from all danger.

The prince was so delighted at the sight that he forgot how hungry he was, and instantly slipped on the coat of chain armour under his tunic, and hid the sword under his cloak, for he did not mean to say anything about what he had found. Then he went back to his mother, who was waiting impatiently for him.

'What have you been doing all this time?' she asked angrily. 'I thought you had been killed by robbers!'

'Oh, just looking round,' he answered; 'but though I searched everywhere I could find nothing to eat.'

'I am very much afraid that it is a robbers' den,' said the queen. 'We had better go on, hungry though we are.'

'No, it isn't; but still, we had better not stay here,' replied the prince, 'especially as there is nothing to eat. Perhaps we shall find another house.'

They went on for some time, until, sure enough, they came to another house, which also had a light in the window.

'We'll go in here,' said the prince.

'No, no; I am afraid!' cried the queen. 'We shall be attacked and killed! It is a robbers' den: I am sure it is!'

'Yes, it looks like it; but we can't help that,' said her son. 'We have had nothing to eat for hours, and I'm nearly as tired as you.'

The poor queen was, indeed, quite worn out; she could hardly stand for fatigue, and in spite of her terror was half anxious to be persuaded.

'And there's going to be a storm,' added the prince; who feared nothing now that he had the sword.

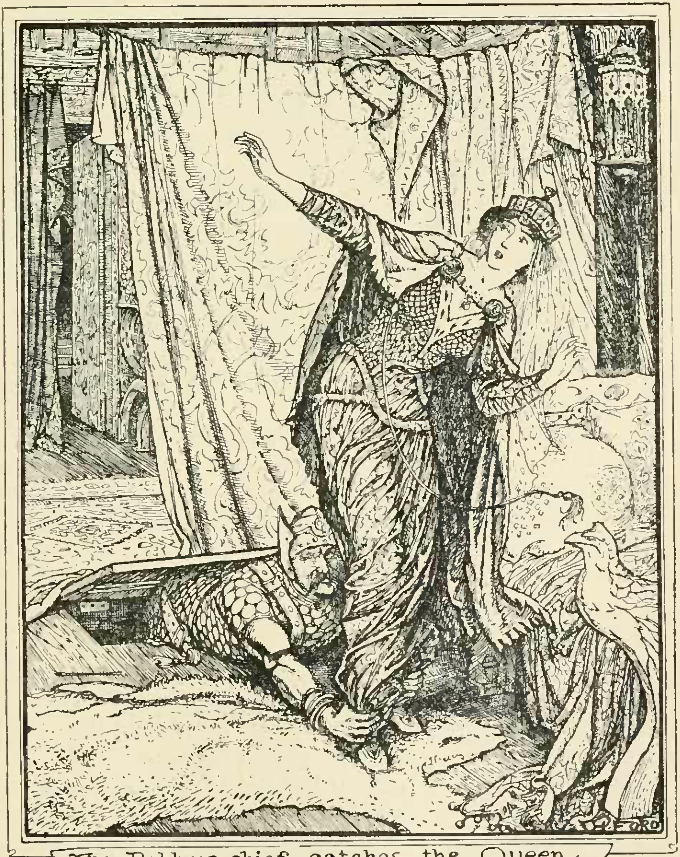
So they went into the house, where they found nobody. In the first room stood a table laid for a meal, with all sorts of good things to eat and drink, though some of the dishes were empty.

'Well, this looks nice,' said the prince, sitting down and helping himself to some delicious strawberries piled on a golden dish, and some iced lemonade. Never had anything tasted so nice; but, all the same, it *was* a robbers' den they had come to, and the robbers, who had only just dined, had gone out into the forest to see whom they could rob.

When the queen and the prince could eat no more they remembered that they were very tired, and the prince looked about till he discovered a comfortable bed, with silken sheets, standing in the next room.

'You get into bed, mother,' he said, 'and I'll lie down by the side. Don't be alarmed; you can sleep quite safely till the morning.' And he lay down with his sword in his hand, and kept watch until the day began to break; then the queen woke up and said she was quite rested and ready to start again.

'First I'll go out into the forest and see if I can find our road,' said the prince. 'And while I'm gone you light the fire and make some coffee. We must eat a good breakfast before we start.'



The Robber-chief catches the Queen

And he ran off into the wood.

After he had gone the queen lit the fire, and then thought she would like to see what was in the other rooms; so she went from one to another, and presently came to one that was very prettily furnished, with lovely pictures on the walls, and pale blue curtains and soft yellow cushions and comfortable easy chairs. As she was looking at all these things, suddenly a trap-door opened in the floor, and the robber-chief came out of the hole and seized her ankles. The queen almost died of fright, and shrieked loudly, then fell on her knees and begged him to spare her life.

'Yes, if you will promise me two things,' he replied; 'first that you will take me home to your country and let me be crowned king instead of your son; and secondly, that you will kill him in case he should try to take the throne from me—if you will not agree to this I shall kill you.'

'Kill my own son!' gasped the queen, staring at him in horror.

'You need not do that exactly,' said the robber. 'When he returns, just lie on the bed and say that you have been taken ill, and add that you have dreamed that in a forest, a mile away, there are some beautiful apples. If you could only get some of these you would be well again, but if not you will die.'

The queen shuddered as she listened. She was fond of her son, but she was a terrible coward; and so in the end she agreed, hoping that something would occur to save the prince. She had hardly given her promise when a step was heard, and the robber hastily hid himself.

'Well, mother,' cried the prince as he entered, 'I have been through the forest and found the road, so we will start directly we have had some breakfast.'

'Oh, I feel so ill!' said the queen. 'I could not walk a single step; and there is only one thing that will cure me.'

'What is that?' asked the prince.

'I dreamed,' answered the queen, in a faint voice, 'that, a mile away, there is a forest where the most beautiful apples grow, and if I could have some of them I should soon be well again.'

'Oh! but dreams don't mean anything,' said the prince. 'There is a magician who lives near here. I'll go to him and ask for a spell to cure you.'

'My dreams always mean something,' said the queen, shaking her head. 'If I don't get any apples I shall die.' She did not know why the robber wanted to send the prince to this particular forest, but as a matter of fact it was full of wild animals who would tear to pieces any traveller who entered it.

'Well, I'll go,' answered the prince. 'But I really must have some breakfast first; I shall walk all the faster.'

'If you do not hurry you will find me dead when you come back,' murmured the queen fretfully. She thought her son was not nearly anxious enough about her, and by this time she had begun to believe that she really was as ill as she had said.

When the prince had eaten and drunk, he set off, and soon came to the forest, and sure enough it was full of lions and tigers, and bears and wolves, who came rushing towards him; but instead of springing on him and tearing him to pieces, they lay down on the ground and licked his hands. He speedily found the tree with the apples which his mother wanted, but the branches were so high he could not reach them, and there was no way of climbing up the smooth trunk.

'It is no use after all, I can't get up there,' he said to himself. 'What am I to do now?'

But, as he turned away his sword chanced to touch the tree, and immediately two apples fell down. He picked them up joyfully, and was going away when a little dog came out of a hill close by, and running up to him, began tugging at his clothes and whining.

'What do you want, little dog?' asked the prince, stooping down to pat his soft black head.

The dog ran to a hole that was in the hill and sat there looking out, as much as to say: 'Come along in with me.'

'I may as well go and see what is in there,' thought the prince, and he went over to the hill. But the hole was so small that he could not get through it, so he thrust his sword into it, and immediately it became larger.

'Ha, ha!' he chuckled; 'it's worth something to have a sword like that.' And he bent down and crept through the hole.

The first thing he beheld, when he entered a room at the very end of a dark passage, was a beautiful princess, who was bound by an iron chain to an iron pillar.

'What evil fate brought you here?' he asked in surprise; and the lady answered:

'It isn't much use for me to tell you lest my lot becomes yours.'

'I am not afraid of that. Tell me who you are and what has brought you here,' begged the prince.

'My story is not long,' she said, smiling sadly. 'I am a princess from Arabia, and twelve robbers who dwell in this place are fighting among themselves as to which shall have me to wife.'

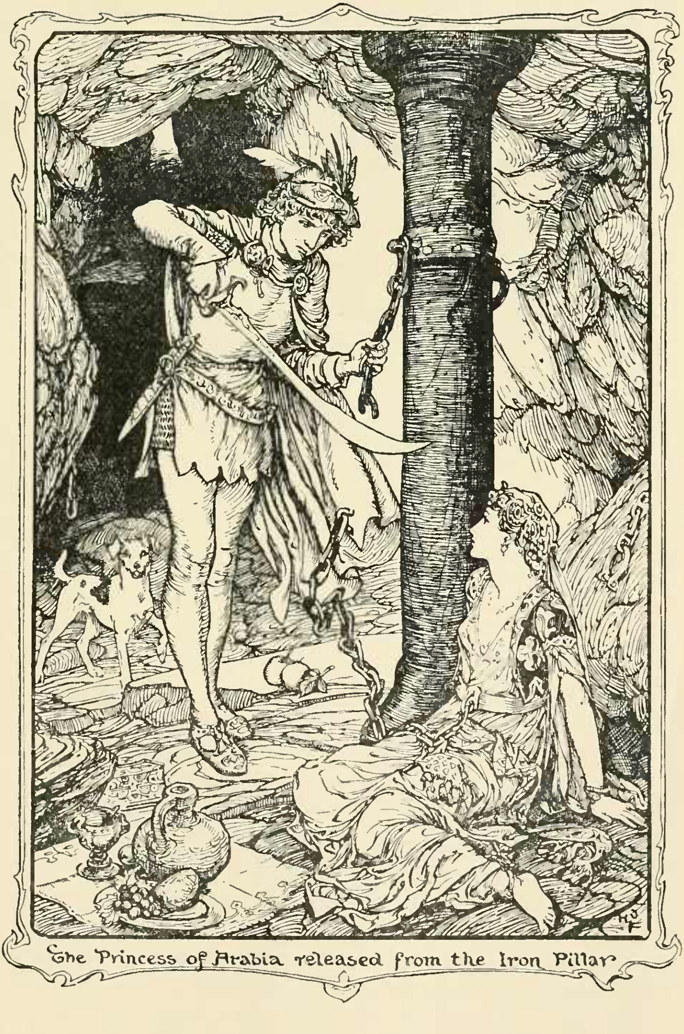
'Shall I save you?' asked the prince. And she answered:

'Yes; but you can't do it. To begin with, how could you break the chain I am bound with?'

'Oh, that's easy enough,' said he, taking out his sword; and directly it touched the chain the links fell apart and the princess was free.

'Come!' said the prince, taking her hand. But she drew back.

'No, I dare not!' she cried. 'If we should meet the robbers in the passage they would kill us both.'



The Princess of Arabia released from the Iron Pillar

'Not they!' said the prince, brandishing his sword. 'But how long have you been here?' he added quickly.

'About twenty years, I think,' said the princess, reckoning with her fingers.

'Twenty years!' exclaimed the prince. 'Then you had better shut your eyes, for when you have been sitting there so long it might hurt you to go too suddenly into the daylight. So you are the Princess of Arabia, whose beauty is famous throughout all the world! I, too, am a prince.'

'Will you not come back to Arabia and marry me, now you have saved my life?' asked the princess. 'Even if my father is living still, he must be old, and after his death you can be king.'

'No,' replied the prince, 'I cannot do that—I must live and die in my own country. But at the end of a year I will follow you and marry you.' And that was all he would say.

Then the princess took a heavy ring from her finger and put it on his. Her father's and her mother's names were engraved in it, as well as her own, and she asked him to keep it as a reminder of his promise.

'I will die before I part from it,' said the prince. 'And if at the end of a year I am still living, I will come. I believe I have heard that at the other side of this forest there is a port from which ships sail to Arabia. Let us hasten there at once.'

Hand in hand they set off through the forest, and when they came to the port they found a ship just ready to sail. The princess said good-bye to the prince, and went on board the vessel, and when she reached her own country there were great rejoicings, for her parents had never expected to see her again. She told them how a prince had saved her from the robbers, and was coming in a year's time to marry her, and they were greatly pleased.

'All the same,' said the king, 'I wish he were here now. A year is a long time.'

When the princess was no longer before his eyes, the prince recollected why he had entered the forest, and made all the haste he could back to the robbers' home.

The robber-chief could smell the apples from afar, for he had a nose like an ogre, and he said to the queen:

'That is a strange fellow! If he had gone into the forest the wild beasts must have eaten him unless he has a powerful charm to protect him. If that is so we must get it away from him.'

'No, he has nothing,' answered the queen, who was quite fascinated by the robber.

But the robber did not believe her.

'We must think of a way to get it,' he said. 'When he comes in say you are well again, and have some food ready for him. Then, whilst he is eating, tell him you dreamed that he was attacked by wild beasts, and ask him how he managed to escape from them. After he has told you I can easily find a way to take his charm from him.'

Shortly after the prince came in.

'How are you, mother!' he said gaily. 'Here are your apples. Now you will soon be well again, and ready to come away with me.'

'Oh, I am better already,' she said. 'And see, your dinner is all hot for you; eat it up, and then we will start.'

Whilst he was eating she said to him: 'I had a horrible dream while you were away. I saw you in a forest full of wild animals, and they were running round you and growling fiercely. How did you manage to escape from them?'

'Oh, it was only a dream!' laughed the prince.

'But *my* dreams are always true,' said his mother. 'Tell me how it was.'

The prince wondered for some time whether he should tell her or not, but at last he decided to let her into the secret.

'One should tell one's mother everything,' he thought. And he told her.

'See, mother, here are a sword and a mail shirt which I found in the first house we entered in the forest, and as long as I carry them nothing can hurt me. That is what saved me from the wild beasts.'

'How can I be thankful enough!' exclaimed the queen. And directly the prince's back was turned, she hurried to tell the robber.

The robber, as soon as he heard the news, made a sleeping-draught, and bade the queen give it to her son before he went to bed that night.

Accordingly, as soon as the prince began to get sleepy, the queen handed him the cup containing the draught.

'Drink this, to please me,' she said. 'It will do you good after all you've gone through, and make you sleep well.'

'What an odd taste it has!' murmured the prince as he drank it.

Immediately he fell asleep; and the robber came in and took away his sword and shirt of mail.

'These things belong to my brother,' he said. After he had got them both in his hand the robber woke him.

'I am the master now,' said he. 'Choose one of two things—either you must die, or your eyes will be put out, and you will be sent back to the forest.'

The prince's blood grew cold at these words. Then a thought struck him, and he turned to his mother: 'Is this *your* doing?' he asked sternly. And though she burst into tears and denied it, the prince knew she was not telling the truth.

'Well,' said he, '"whilst there is life there is hope." I will go back to the forest.'

Then the robber put out his eyes, gave him a stick, and some food and drink, and drove him into the forest, hoping that the wild beasts would kill him, as he no longer had the sword and shirt to protect him.

'Now,' he said to the queen, 'we will return to your country.'

The next day they set sail, and as soon as they reached home, they were married, and the robber became king.

Meanwhile the poor prince was wandering about in the forest, hoping to find someone who would help him, and perhaps take him into service, for now he had no money and no home. It so happened that there had been a great hunt in the forest, and the wild beasts had all fled before the hunters and were hiding, so nothing did him any harm. At last, one day, just when his food was all gone and he had made up his mind that he must surely die of hunger, he came to the port whence the ships sailed for Arabia. One vessel was just ready to start, and the captain was going on board when he saw the prince.

'Why, here is a poor blind fellow!' he said. 'No doubt that is the work of the robbers. Let us take him to Arabia with us. Would you like to come, my good man?' he asked the prince.

Oh, how glad he was to hear someone speak kindly to him again! And he answered that he would, and the sailors helped him to climb up the side of the ship. When they got to Arabia the captain took him to the public baths, and ordered one of the slaves to wash him. Whilst he was being washed the princess's ring slipped off his finger and was afterwards found by the slave who cleaned out the bath. The man showed it to a friend of his who lived at the palace.

'Why, it is the princess's ring!' he said. 'Where did it come from?'

'It fell off a blind man's finger,' said the slave. 'He must have stolen it; but I dare say you will be able to return it to the princess.'

So that evening the man took the ring to the palace and gave it to his daughter, who was the princess's favourite slave, and the girl gave it to her mistress. When the princess saw it she uttered a cry of joy.

'It is the ring I gave my betrothed!' she said. 'Take me to him at once.'

The bath-keeper thought it strange that the princess should be betrothed to a blind beggar, but he did as she bade him, and when she saw the prince she cried:

'At last you have come! The year is over, and I thought you were dead. Now we will be married immediately.' And she went home and told the king that he was to send an escort to bring her betrothed to the palace. Naturally the king was rather surprised at the sudden arrival of the prince; but when he heard that he was blind he was very much annoyed.

'I cannot have a blind person to succeed me,' he said. 'It is perfectly absurd!'

But the princess had had her own way all her life, and in the end the king gave way as he had always done. The prince was taken to the palace with much ceremony and splendour; but in spite of this the king was not contented. Still, it could not be helped, and really it was time the princess was married, though she looked as young as ever. There had been hundreds of knights and princes who had begged her to bestow her hand upon them, but she would have nothing to do with anyone; and now she had taken it into her head to marry this blind prince, and nobody else would she have.

One evening, as it was fine, the prince and princess went into the garden, and sat down under a tree.

Two ravens were perched on a bush near by, and the prince, who could understand bird language, heard one of them say: 'Do you know that it is Midsummer-eve to-night?'

'Yes,' said the other.

'And do you know that part of the garden which is known as the Queen's Bed?'

'Yes.'

'Well, perhaps you don't know this, that whoever has bad eyes, or no eyes at all, should bathe his eye-sockets in the dew that falls there to-night, because then he will get his sight back. Only he must do it between twelve and one o'clock.'

That was good news for the prince and princess to hear, and the young man begged the princess to lead him to the place called the Queen's Bed, which was the little plot of grass where the queen used often to lie down and take her midday nap. Then, between twelve and one o'clock, he bathed his eyes with the dew that was falling there, and found he could see again as well as ever.

'I can see you!' he said to the princess, gazing at her as if he had never seen anything before.

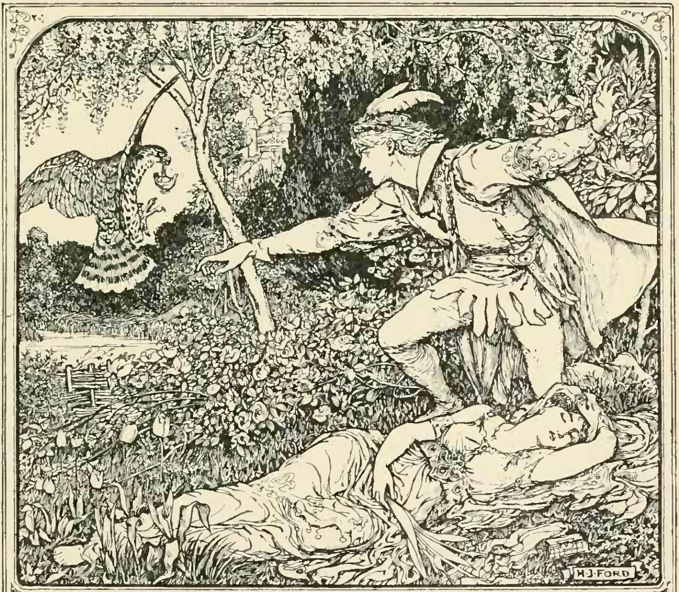
'I don't believe it,' she answered.

'Well, go and hang your handkerchief on a bush, and if I find it at once you *must* believe me,' he said.

And so she did, and he went straight up to the handkerchief.

'Yes, indeed, you can see,' cried the princess. 'To think that my mother's bed has really given back your sight!' and she went to the bank and sat down again; and by-and-by, as the day was hot, the princess fell asleep. As the prince watched her he suddenly saw something shining on her neck. It was a little golden lamp that gave out a bright light, and it hung from a golden chain. The prince thought he would like to examine it more closely, so he unfastened the chain, but as he did so the lamp fell to the ground. Before he could pick it up a hawk flew in, snatched up the little lamp and flew away again with it. The prince set off in pursuit, and ran on and on without being able to catch the bird, until at length he had lost his way. Trying to find it, he wandered on, up and down, until he came to the forest where he had found the princess.

Meantime, the princess woke up, and finding herself alone she set out to look for him. In the end she also lost her way, and as she was walking about, not knowing what to do, the robbers captured her and took her back to the cave from which the prince had rescued her. So there they were after all their trouble—no better off than before!



The Hawk Flies away with the Lamp

The prince wandered on, trying to find his way back to Arabia, until he chanced one day to meet twelve youths, walking gaily through the forest, singing and laughing. ‘Where are you going?’ he asked. And they told him they were looking for work.

'I'll join you, if I may,' said the prince. And they answered: 'The more the merrier.'

Then the prince went with them, and they all journeyed on until they met an old troll.

'Where are you going, my masters?' asked the troll.

'To seek service,' they told him.

'Then come and serve me,' he said; 'there will be plenty to eat and drink, and not much work to do, and if, at the end of a year, you can answer three questions, I'll give you each a sack of gold. Otherwise you must be turned into beasts.'

The youths thought this sounded easy enough, so they went home with the troll to his castle.

'You will find all that you want here,' he said; 'and all you need do is to take care of the house, for I am going away, and shall only return when the year is over.'

Then he went away, and the young men, left to themselves, had a fine time of it; for they did no work, and only amused themselves with singing and drinking. Every day they found the table laid with good things to eat and drink, and when they had finished, the plates and dishes were cleared away by invisible hands. Only the prince, who was sad for his lost princess, ate and drank sparingly, and worked hard keeping the house in order.

One day, as he sat in his own room, he heard the voice of the old troll beneath his window talking to another troll.

'To-morrow,' said he, 'the year is up.'

'And what questions will you ask?' inquired the other.

'First I shall ask how long they have been here—they don't know, the young fools! Secondly I shall ask what shines on the roof of the castle.'

'And what is that?'

'The lamp that was stolen by me from the princess as she slept in the garden.'

'And what is the third question?'

'I shall ask where the food and drink they consume every day come from. I steal it from the king's table; but they don't know that.'

The day after, the troll entered.

'Now I shall ask my questions,' said he. 'To begin with: How long have you been here?'

The young men had been so busy drinking and making merry that they had forgotten all about the agreement, so they remained silent.

'One week,' said one, at last.

'Two months,' guessed another. But the prince answered, 'One year.'

'Right,' replied the troll. But the second question was more difficult.

'What is it that shines on the roof?'

The young men guessed and guessed. 'The sun—the moon.' But none of them really knew.

'May I answer?' asked the prince.

'Yes, certainly,' replied the troll; and the prince spoke.

'The lamp that you stole from the princess whilst she was asleep in the garden.' And again the troll nodded.

The third question was harder still.

'Where does the meat and drink you have had here come from?'

None of the young men could guess.

'May I say?' asked the prince.

'Yes, if you can,' replied the troll.

'It comes from the king's table,' said the prince.

And that was all. Now they might take the sacks of gold and go, and the young men went off in such a hurry that the prince was left behind. Presently, they met an old man who asked for money.

'No, we haven't any,' they answered.

So they hurried on, and by-and-by up came the prince.

'Has your lordship a piece of money for a poor man?' asked the old fellow.

'Yes,' said the prince, and gave him his whole sackful.

'I don't want it,' said the old man, who was really the troll they had just left in disguise. 'But since you're so generous, here is the princess's lamp, and the princess herself is in the cave where you found her; but how you're going to save her again without the magic sword I don't know.'

When he heard that, the prince knew where she was; and that was the beginning of her rescue. So he disguised himself to look like a pedlar and travelled on until he reached his own city, where his mother, the queen, and the robber-chief were living. Then he went in to a goldsmith's shop and ordered a great number of kitchen pots to be made out of pure gold. That was not an order the goldsmith had every day, but the things were ready at last, saucepans and kettles and gridirons all of pure gold. Then the prince put them in his basket and went up to the palace, and asked to see the queen.

Directly she heard about the wonderful gold pots and pans she came out at once, and began unpacking the basket and admiring the things. She was so absorbed in them that the prince soon found an opportunity to steal into the bedroom and take the sword and shirt which were hung there, and go back again without his mother having noticed his absence.

'The things are all beautiful!' she said. 'How much would you take for them?'

'Name your own price, your majesty,' answered the prince.

'I really don't know what to say,' said the queen. 'Wait till my husband comes back—men understand such things better; and then, as you are a stranger, he would like to chat with you a little.' The prince bowed, and waited silently in a corner.

Soon after the robber returned.

'Come and see all these lovely gold saucepans!' cried the queen.

But, as the robber entered the room, the prince touched him with the magic sword, and he fell to the ground.

'Perhaps, now you know me, mother,' the prince said, taking off his disguise, 'you had better repent for all the wrong you have done me, or your life will be short.'

'Oh, have mercy!' she cried, 'I could not help it. I was so frightened.'

The prince had mercy. He ordered the wicked king to be stripped of his fine clothes, and to be driven into the forest, where the wild beasts tore him to pieces. The queen he sent to her own country. Then he set off for the cave where the princess was sitting chained as before, and with the help of the magic sword he rescued her again without any difficulty. They soon reached the port and set sail for Arabia, where they were married; and till they died, a long while after, they reigned happily over both countries.

[Fra *Eventyr fra Gylbauck samlede og optegnede af Evald Taug Kristensen*. Translated from the Danish by Mrs. Skovgaard Pedersen.]

THE CLEVER WEAVER

Once upon a time the king of a far country was sitting on his throne, listening to the complaints of his people, and judging between them. That morning there had been fewer cases than usual to deal with, and the king was about to rise and go into his gardens, when a sudden stir was heard outside, and the lord high chamberlain entered, and inquired if his majesty would be graciously pleased to receive the ambassador of a powerful emperor who lived in the east, and was greatly feared by the neighbouring sovereigns. The king, who stood as much in dread of him as the rest, gave orders that the envoy should be admitted at once, and that a banquet should be prepared in his honour. Then he settled himself again on his throne, wondering what the envoy had to say.

The envoy said nothing. He advanced to the throne where the king was awaiting him, and stooping down, traced on the floor with a rod which he held in his hand a black circle all round it. Then he sat down on a seat that was near, and took no further notice of anyone.

The king and his courtiers were equally mystified and enraged at this strange behaviour, but the envoy sat as calm and still as an image, and it soon became plain that they would get no explanation from *him*. The ministers were hastily summoned to a council, but not one of them could throw any light upon the subject. This made the king more angry than ever, and he told them that unless before sunset they could find someone capable of solving the mystery he would hang them all.

The king was, as the ministers knew, a man of his word; and they quickly mapped out the city into districts, so that they might visit house by house, and question the occupants as to whether they could fathom the action of the ambassador. Most of them received no reply except a puzzled stare; but, luckily, one of them was more observant than the rest, and on entering an empty cottage where a swing was swinging of itself, he began to think it might be worth while for him to see the owner. Opening a door leading into another room, he found a second swing, swinging gently like the first, and from the window he beheld a patch of corn, and a willow which moved perpetually without any wind, in order to frighten away the sparrows. Feeling more and more curious, he descended the stairs and found himself in a large light workshop in which was seated a weaver at his loom. But all the weaver did was to guide his threads, for the machine that he had invented to set in motion the swings and the willow pole, made the loom work.

When he saw the great wheel standing in the corner, and had guessed the use of it, the merchant heaved a sigh of relief. At any rate, if the weaver could not guess the riddle, he at least might put the minister on the right track. So without more ado he told the story of the circle, and ended by declaring that the person who could explain its meaning should be handsomely rewarded.

'Come with me at once,' he said. 'The sun is low in the heavens, and there is no time to lose.'

The weaver stood thinking for a moment and then walked across to a window, outside of which was a hen-coop with two knuckle-bones lying beside it. These he picked up, and taking the hen from the coop, he tucked it under his arm.

'I am ready,' he answered, turning to the minister.

In the hall the king still sat on his throne, and the envoy on his seat. Signing to the minister to remain where he was, the weaver advanced to the envoy, and placed the knuckle-bones on the floor beside him. For answer, the envoy took a handful of millet seed out of his pocket and scattered it round; upon which the weaver set down the hen, who ate it up in a moment. At that the envoy rose without a word, and took his departure.

As soon as he had left the hall, the king beckoned to the weaver.

'You alone seem to have guessed the riddle,' said he, 'and great shall be your reward. But tell me, I pray you, what it all means?'

'The meaning, O king,' replied the weaver, 'is this: The circle drawn by the envoy round your throne is the message of the emperor, and signifies, "If I send an army and surround your capital, will you lay down your arms?" The knuckle-bones which I placed before him told him, "You are but children in comparison with us. Toys like these are the only playthings you are fit for." The millet that he scattered was an emblem of the number of soldiers that his master can bring into the field; but by the hen which ate up the seed he understood that one of our men could destroy a host of theirs.'

'I do not think,' he added, 'that the emperor will declare war.'

'You have saved me and my honour,' cried the king, 'and wealth and glory shall be heaped upon you. Name your reward, and you shall have it even to the half of my kingdom.'

'The small farm outside the city gates, as a marriage portion for my daughter, is all I ask,' answered the weaver, and it was all he would accept. 'Only, O king,' were his parting words, 'I would beg of you to remember that weavers also are of value to a state, and that they are sometimes cleverer even than ministers!'

[From *Contes Arméniens*. Par Frédéric Macler.]

THE BOY WHO FOUND FEAR AT LAST

Once upon a time there lived a woman who had one son whom she loved dearly. The little cottage in which they dwelt was built on the outskirts of a forest, and as they had no neighbours, the place was very lonely, and the boy was kept at home by his mother to bear her company.

They were sitting together on a winter's evening, when a storm suddenly sprang up, and the wind blew the door open. The woman started and shivered, and glanced over her shoulder as if she half expected to see some horrible thing behind her. 'Go and shut the door,' she said hastily to her son, 'I feel frightened.'

'Frightened?' repeated the boy. 'What does it feel like to be frightened?'

'Well—just frightened,' answered the mother. 'A fear of something, you hardly know what, takes hold of you.'

'It must be very odd to feel like that,' replied the boy. 'I will go through the world and seek fear till I find it.' And the next morning, before his mother was out of bed, he had left the forest behind him.

After walking for some hours he reached a mountain, which he began to climb. Near the top, in a wild and rocky spot, he came upon a band of fierce robbers, sitting round a fire. The boy, who was cold and tired, was delighted to see the bright flames, so he went up to them and said, 'Good greeting to you, sirs,' and wriggled himself in between the men, till his feet almost touched the burning logs.

The robbers stopped drinking and eyed him curiously, and at last the captain spoke.

'No caravan of armed men would dare to come here, even the very birds shun our camp, and who are you to venture in so boldly?'

'Oh, I have left my mother's house in search of fear. Perhaps you can show it to me?'

'Fear is wherever *we* are,' answered the captain.

'But *where*?' asked the boy, looking round. 'I see nothing.'

'Take this pot and some flour and butter and sugar over to the churchyard which lies down there, and bake us a cake for supper,' replied the robber. And the boy, who was by this time quite warm, jumped up cheerfully, and slinging the pot over his arm, ran down the hill.

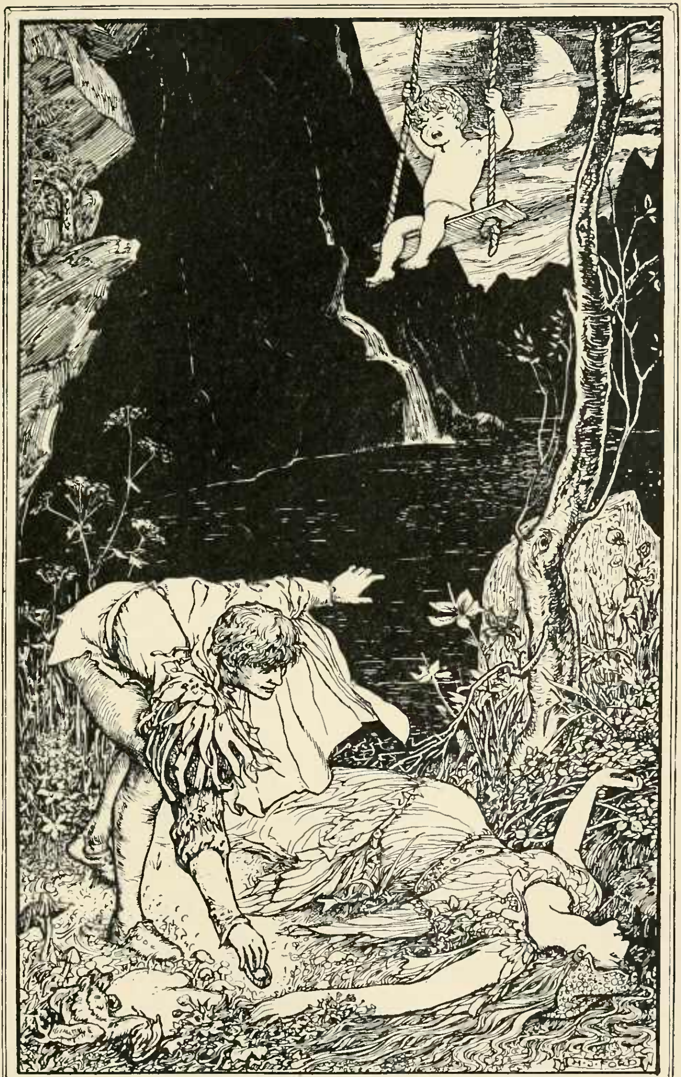
When he got to the churchyard he collected some sticks and made a fire; then he filled the pot with water from a little stream close by, and mixing the flour and butter and sugar together, he set the cake on to cook. It was not long before it grew crisp and brown, and then the boy lifted it from the pot and placed it on a stone, while he put out the fire. At that moment a hand was stretched from a grave, and a voice said:

'Is that cake for me?'

'Do you think I am going to give to the dead the food of the living?' replied the boy, with a laugh. And giving the hand a tap with his spoon, and picking up the cake, he went up the mountain side, whistling merrily.

'Well, have you found fear?' asked the robbers when he held out the cake to the captain.

'No; was it there?' answered the boy. 'I saw nothing but a hand which came from a grave, and belonged to someone who wanted my cake, but I just rapped the fingers with my spoon, and said it was not for him, and then the hand vanished. Oh, how nice the fire is!' And he flung himself on his knees before it, and



THE BOY SECURES THE BRACELET

so did not notice the glances of surprise cast by the robbers at each other.

'There is another chance for you,' said one at length. 'On the other side of the mountain lies a deep pool; go to that, and perhaps you may meet fear on the way.'

'I hope so, indeed,' answered the boy. And he set out at once.

He soon beheld the waters of the pool gleaming in the moonlight, and as he drew near he saw a tall swing standing just over it, and in the swing a child was seated, weeping bitterly.

'That is a strange place for a swing,' thought the boy; 'but I wonder what he is crying about.' And he was hurrying on towards the child, when a maiden ran up and spoke to him.

'I want to lift my little brother from the swing,' cried she, 'but it is so high above me, that I cannot reach. If you will get closer to the edge of the pool, and let me mount on your shoulder, I think I can reach him.'

'Willingly,' replied the boy, and in an instant the girl had climbed to his shoulders. But instead of lifting the child from the swing, as she could easily have done, she pressed her feet so firmly on each side of the youth's neck, that he felt that in another minute he would be choked, or else fall into the water beneath him. So, gathering up all his strength, he gave a mighty heave, and threw the girl backwards. As she touched the ground a bracelet fell from her arm, and this the youth picked up.

'I may as well keep it as a remembrance of all the queer things that have happened to me since I left home,' he said to himself, and turning to look for the child, he saw that both it and the swing had vanished, and that the first streaks of dawn were in the sky.

With the bracelet on his arm, the youth started for a little town which was situated in the plain on the further side of the mountain, and as, hungry and thirsty, he entered its principal street, a Jew stopped him. 'Where did you get that bracelet?' asked the Jew. 'It belongs to me.'

'No, it is mine,' replied the boy.

'It is not. Give it to me at once, or it will be the worse for you!' cried the Jew.

'Let us go before a judge, and tell him our stories,' said the boy. 'If he decides in your favour, you shall have it; if in mine, I will keep it!'

To this the Jew agreed, and the two went together to the great hall, in which the kadi was administering justice. He listened very carefully to what each had to say, and then pronounced his verdict. Neither of the two claimants had proved his right to the bracelet, therefore it must remain in the possession of the judge till its fellow was brought before him.

When they heard this, the Jew and the boy looked at each other, and their eyes said: 'Where are we to go to find the other one?' But as they knew there was no use in disputing the decision, they bowed low and left the hall of audience.

Wandering he knew not whither, the youth found himself on the sea-shore. At a little distance was a ship which had struck on a hidden rock, and was rapidly sinking, while on deck the crew were gathered, with faces white as death, shrieking and wringing their hands.

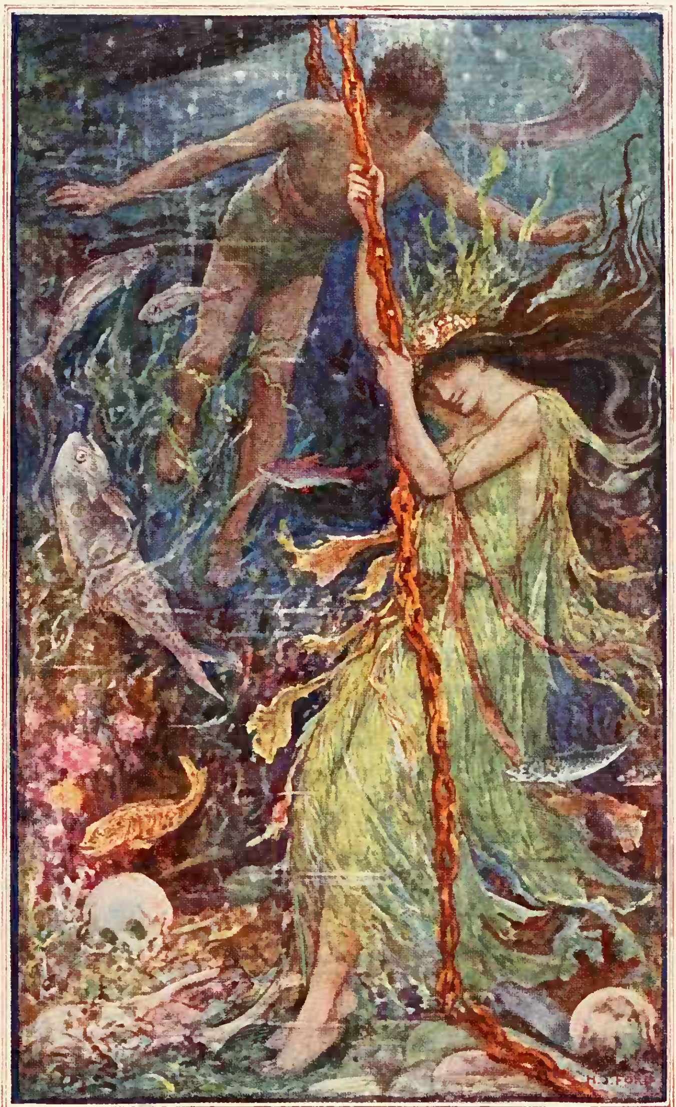
'Have you met with fear?' shouted the boy. And the answer came above the noise of the waves.

'Oh, help! help! We are drowning!'

Then the boy flung off his clothes, and swam to the ship, where many hands were held out to draw him on board.

'The ship is tossed hither and thither, and will soon be sucked down,' cried the crew again. 'Death is very near, and we are frightened!'

'Give me a rope,' said the boy in reply, and he took



THE SEA-MAIDEN WITH A WICKED FACE

it, and made it safe round his body at one end, and to the mast at the other, and sprang into the sea. Down he went, down, down, down, till at last his feet touched the bottom, and he stood up and looked about him. There, sure enough, a sea-maiden with a wicked face was tugging hard at a chain which she had fastened to the ship with a grappling iron, and was dragging it bit by bit beneath the waves. Seizing her arms in both his hands, he forced her to drop the chain, and the ship above remaining steady, the sailors were able gently to float her off the rock. Then taking a rusty knife from a heap of seaweed at his feet, he cut the rope round his waist and fastened the sea-maiden firmly to a stone, so that she could do no more mischief, and bidding her farewell, he swam back to the beach, where his clothes were still lying.

The youth dressed himself quickly and walked on till he came to a beautiful shady garden filled with flowers, and with a clear little stream running through. The day was hot, and he was tired, so he entered the gate, and seated himself under a clump of bushes covered with sweet-smelling red blossoms, and it was not long before he fell asleep. Suddenly a rush of wings and a cool breeze awakened him, and raising his head cautiously, he saw three doves plunging into the stream. They splashed joyfully about, and shook themselves, and then dived to the bottom of a deep pool. When they appeared again they were no longer three doves, but three beautiful damsels, bearing between them a table made of mother of pearl. On this they placed drinking cups fashioned from pink and green shells, and one of the maidens filled a cup from a crystal goblet, and was raising it to her mouth, when her sister stopped her.

'To whose health do you drink?' asked she.

'To the youth who prepared the cake, and rapped my hand with the spoon when I stretched it out of the earth,' answered the maiden, 'and was never afraid as other men were! But to whose health do you drink?'

'To the youth on whose shoulders I climbed at the edge of the pool, and who threw me off with such a jerk, that I lay unconscious on the ground for hours,' replied the second. 'But you, my sister,' added she, turning to the third girl, 'to whom do you drink?'

'Down in the sea I took hold of a ship and shook it and pulled it till it would soon have been lost,' said she. And as she spoke she looked quite different from what she had done with the chain in her hands, seeking to work mischief. 'But a youth came, and freed the ship and bound me to a rock. To his health I drink,' and they all three lifted their cups and drank silently.

As they put their cups down, the youth appeared before them.

'Here am I, the youth whose health you have drunk; and now give me the bracelet that matches a jewelled band which of a surety fell from the arm of one of you. A Jew tried to take it from me, but I would not let him have it, and he dragged me before the kadi, who kept my bracelet till I could show him its fellow. And I have been wandering hither and thither in search of it, and that is how I have found myself in such strange places.'

'Come with us, then,' said the maidens, and they led him down a passage into a hall, out of which opened many chambers, each one of greater splendour than the last. From a shelf heaped up with gold and jewels the eldest sister took a bracelet, which in every way was exactly like the one which was in the judge's keeping, and fastened it to the youth's arm.

'Go at once and show this to the kadi,' said she, 'and he will give you the fellow to it.'

'I shall never forget you,' answered the youth, 'but it may be long before we meet again, for I shall never rest till I have found fear.' Then he went his way, and won the bracelet from the kadi. After this, he again set forth in his quest of fear.

On and on walked the youth, but fear never crossed his path, and one day he entered a large town, where all the streets and squares were so full of people, he could hardly pass between them.

'Why are all these crowds gathered together?' he asked of a man who stood next him.

'The ruler of this country is dead,' was the reply, 'and as he had no children, it is needful to choose a successor. Therefore each morning one of the sacred pigeons is let loose from the tower yonder, and on whomsoever the bird shall perch, that man is our king. In a few minutes the pigeon will fly. Wait and see what happens.'

Every eye was fixed on the tall tower which stood in the centre of the chief square, and the moment that the sun was seen to stand straight over it, a door was opened and a beautiful pigeon, gleaming with pink and grey, blue and green, came rushing through the air. Onward it flew, onward, onward, till at length it rested on the head of the boy. Then a great shout arose:

'The king! the king!' but as he listened to the cries, a vision, swifter than lightning, flashed across his brain. He saw himself seated on a throne, spending his life trying, and never succeeding, to make poor people rich; miserable people happy; bad people good; never doing anything he wished to do, not able even to marry the girl that he loved.

'No! no!' he shrieked, hiding his face in his hands; but the crowds who heard him thought he was overcome by the grandeur that awaited him, and paid no heed.

'Well, to make quite sure, let fly more pigeons,' said they, but each pigeon followed where the first had led, and the cries arose louder than ever:

'The king! the king!' And as the young man heard, a cold shiver, that he knew not the meaning of, ran through him.

'This is fear whom you have so long sought,' whispered a voice, which seemed to reach his ears alone. And the youth bowed his head as the vision once more flashed before his eyes, and he accepted his doom, and made ready to pass his life with fear beside him.

[Adapted from *Türkische Volksmärchen*. Von Dr. Ignaz Künos. E. J. Brill, Leiden.]

HE WINS WHO WAITS

Once upon a time there reigned a king who had an only daughter. The girl had been spoiled by everybody from her birth, and, besides being beautiful, was clever and wilful, and when she grew old enough to be married she refused to have anything to say to the prince whom her father favoured, but declared she would choose a husband for herself. By long experience the king knew that when once she had made up her mind, there was no use expecting her to change it, so he inquired meekly what she wished him to do.

'Summon all the young men in the kingdom to appear before me a month from to-day,' answered the princess; 'and the one to whom I shall give this golden apple shall be my husband.'

'But, my dear——' began the king, in tones of dismay.

'The one to whom I shall give this golden apple shall be my husband,' repeated the princess, in a louder voice than before. And the king understood the signal, and with a sigh proceeded to do her bidding.

The young men arrived—tall and short, dark and fair, rich and poor. They stood in rows in the great courtyard in front of the palace, and the princess, clad in robes of green, with a golden veil flowing behind her, passed before them all, holding the apple. Once or twice she stopped and hesitated, but in the end she always passed on, till she came to a youth near the end of the last row. There was nothing specially remarkable about him, the bystanders thought; nothing that was likely to take a girl's fancy. A hundred others were handsomer, and all wore finer clothes; but he met the princess's eyes frankly and with a smile, and she smiled too, and held out the apple.

'There is some mistake,' cried the king, who had anxiously watched her progress, and hoped that none of the candidates would please her. 'It is impossible that she can wish to marry the son of a poor widow, who has not a farthing in the world! Tell her that I will not hear of it, and that she must go through the rows again and fix upon someone else;' and the princess went through the rows a second and a third time, and on each occasion she gave the apple to the widow's son. 'Well, marry him if you will,' exclaimed the angry king; 'but at least you shall not stay here.' And the princess answered nothing, but threw up her head, and taking the widow's son by the hand, they left the castle.

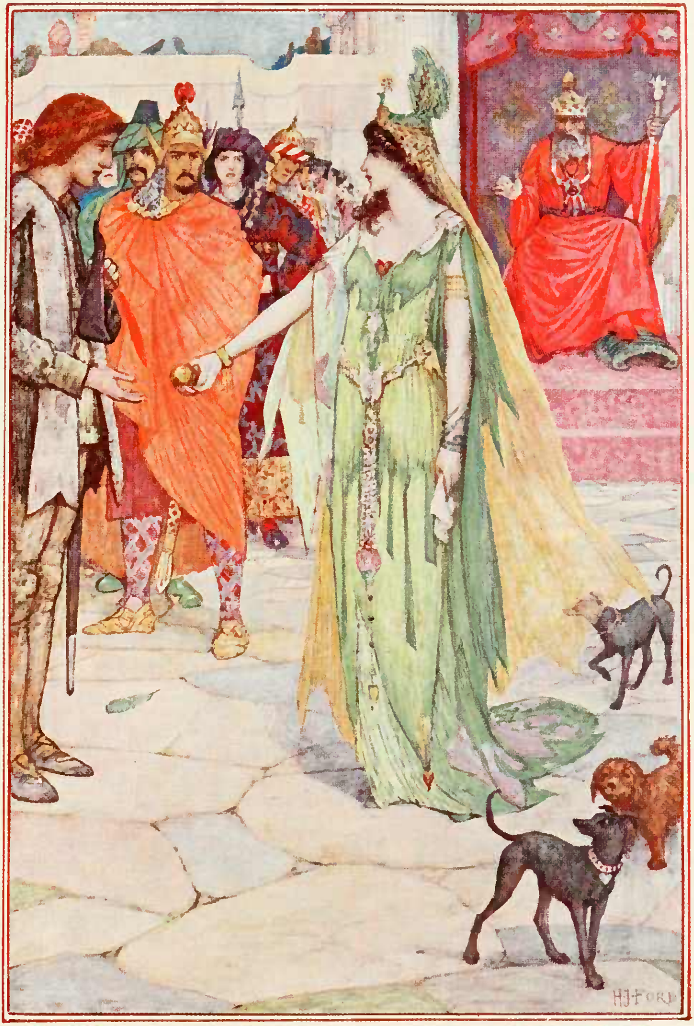
That evening they were married, and after the ceremony went back to the house of the bridegroom's mother, which, in the eyes of the princess, did not look much bigger than a hen-coop.

The old woman was not at all pleased when her son entered bringing his bride with him.

'As if we were not poor enough before,' grumbled she. 'I dare say this is some fine lady who can do nothing to earn her living.' But the princess stroked her arm, and said softly:

'Do not be vexed, dear mother; I am a famous spinner, and can sit at my wheel all day without breaking a thread.'

And she kept her word; but in spite of the efforts of all three, they became poorer and poorer; and at the end of six months it was agreed that the husband should go to the neighbouring town to get work. Here he met a merchant who was about to start on a long journey with a train of camels laden with goods of all sorts, and



THE · PRINCESS · CHOOSES ·

needed a man to help him. The widow's son begged that he would take him as a servant, and to this the merchant assented, giving him his whole year's salary beforehand. The young man returned home with the news, and next day bade farewell to his mother and his wife, who were very sad at parting from him.

'Do not forget me while you are absent,' whispered the princess as she flung her arms round his neck; 'and as you pass by the well which lies near the city gate, stop and greet the old man you will find sitting there. Kiss his hand, and then ask him what counsel he can give you for your journey.'

Then the youth set out, and when he reached the well where the old man was sitting he asked the questions as his wife had bidden him.

'My son,' replied the old man, 'you have done well to come to me, and in return remember three things: "She whom the heart loves, is ever the most beautiful." "Patience is the first step on the road to happiness." "He wins who waits."'

The young man thanked him and went on his way. Next morning early the caravan set out, and before sunset it had arrived at the first halting place, round some wells, where another company of merchants had already encamped. But no rain had fallen for a long while in that rocky country, and both men and beasts were parched with thirst. To be sure, there *was* another well, about half a mile away, where there was always water; but to get it you had to be lowered deep down, and, besides, no one who had ever descended that well had been known to come back.

However, till they could store some water in their bags of goat-skin, the caravans dared not go further into the desert, and on the night of the arrival of the widow's son and his master, the merchants had decided to offer a large reward to anyone who was brave enough to go down into the enchanted well and bring some up.

Thus it happened that at sunrise the young man was aroused from his sleep by a herald making his round of the camp, proclaiming that every merchant present would give a thousand piastres to the man who would risk his life to bring water for themselves and their camels.

The youth hesitated for a little while when he heard the proclamation. The story of the well had spread far and wide, and long ago had reached his ears. The danger was great, he knew; but then, if he came back alive, he would be the possessor of eighty thousand piastres. He turned to the herald who was passing the tent:

'*I* will go,' said he.

'What madness!' cried his master, who happened to be standing near. 'You are too young to throw away your life like that. Run after the herald and tell him you take back your offer.' But the young man shook his head, and the merchant saw that it was useless to try and persuade him.

'Well, it is your own affair,' he observed at last. 'If you must go, you must. Only, if you ever return, I will give you a camel's load of goods and my best mule besides.' And touching his turban in token of farewell, he entered the tent.

Hardly had he done so than a crowd of men were seen pouring out of the camp.

'How can we thank you!' they exclaimed, pressing round the youth. 'Our camels as well as ourselves are almost dead of thirst. See! here is the rope we have brought to let you down.'

'Come then,' answered the youth. And they all set out.

On reaching the well, the rope was knotted securely under his arms, a big goat-skin bottle was given him, and he was gently lowered to the bottom of the pit. Here a clear stream was bubbling over the rocks, and, stooping down, he was about to drink, when a huge Arab appeared before him, saying in a loud voice:

'Come with me!'

The young man rose, never doubting that his last hour had come; but as he could do nothing, he followed the Arab into a brilliantly lighted hall, on the further side of the little river. There his guide sat down, and drawing towards him two boys, one black and the other white, he said to the stranger:

'I have a question to ask you. If you answer it right, your life shall be spared. If not, your head will be forfeit, as the head of many another has been before you. Tell me: which of my two children do I think the handsomer?'

The question did not seem a hard one, for while the white boy was as beautiful a child as ever was seen, his brother was ugly even for a negro. But, just as the youth was going to speak, the old man's counsel flashed into the youth's mind, and he replied hastily: 'The one whom we love best is always the handsomest.'

'You have saved me!' cried the Arab, rising quickly from his seat, and pressing the young man in his arms. 'Ah! if you could only guess what I have suffered from the stupidity of all the people to whom I have put that question, and I was condemned by a wicked genius to remain here until it was answered! But what brought you to this place, and how can I reward you for what you have done for me?'

'By helping me to draw enough water for my caravan of eighty merchants and their camels, who are dying for want of it,' replied the youth.

'That is easily done,' said the Arab. 'Take these three apples, and when you have filled your skin, and are ready to be drawn up, lay one of them on the ground. Half-way to the earth, let fall another, and at the top, drop the third. If you follow my directions no harm will happen to you. And take, besides, these three pomegranates, green, red and white. One day you will find a use for them!'

The young man did as he was told, and stepped out on the rocky waste, where the merchants were anxiously awaiting him. Oh, how thirsty they all were! But even after the camels had drunk, the skin seemed as full as ever.

Full of gratitude for their deliverance, the merchants pressed the money into his hands, while his own master bade him choose what goods he liked, and a mule to carry them.

So the widow's son was rich at last, and when the merchant had sold his merchandise, and returned home to his native city, his servant hired a man by whom he sent the money and the mule back to his wife.

'I will send the pomegranates also,' thought he, 'for if I leave them in my turban they may some day fall out,' and he drew them out of his turban. But the fruit had vanished, and in their places were three precious stones, green, white and red.

For a long time he remained with the merchant, who gradually trusted him with all his business, and gave him a large share of the money he made. When his master died, the young man wished to return home, but the widow begged him to stay and help her; and one day he awoke with a start, to remember that twenty years had passed since he had gone away.

'I want to see my wife,' he said next morning to his mistress. 'If at any time I can be of use to you, send a messenger to me; meanwhile, I have told Hassan what to do.' And mounting a camel he set out.

Now, soon after he had taken service with the merchant a little boy had been born to him, and both the princess and the old woman toiled hard all day to get the baby food and clothing. When the money and the pomegranates arrived there was no need for them to work any more, and the princess saw at once that they were not fruit at all, but precious stones of great value. The old woman, however, not being accustomed, like her daughter-in-law, to the sight of jewels, took them only for common fruit, and wished to give them to the child to eat. She was very angry when the princess hastily took them from her and hid them in her dress, while she went to the market and bought the three finest pomegranates she could find, which she handed the old woman for the little boy.

Then she bought beautiful new clothes for all of them, and when they were dressed they looked as fine as could be. Next, she took out one of the precious stones which her husband had sent her, and placed it in a small silver box. This she wrapped up in a handkerchief embroidered in gold, and filled the old woman's pockets with gold and silver pieces.

'Go, dear mother,' she said, 'to the palace, and present the jewel to the king, and if he asks you what he can give you in return, tell him that you want a paper, with his seal attached, proclaiming that no one is to meddle with anything you may choose to do. Before you leave the palace distribute the money amongst the servants.'

The old woman took the box and started for the palace. No one there had ever seen a ruby of such beauty, and the most famous jeweller in the town was summoned to declare its value. But all he could say was:

'If a boy threw a stone into the air with all his might, and you could pile up gold as high as the flight of the stone, it would not be sufficient to pay for this ruby.'

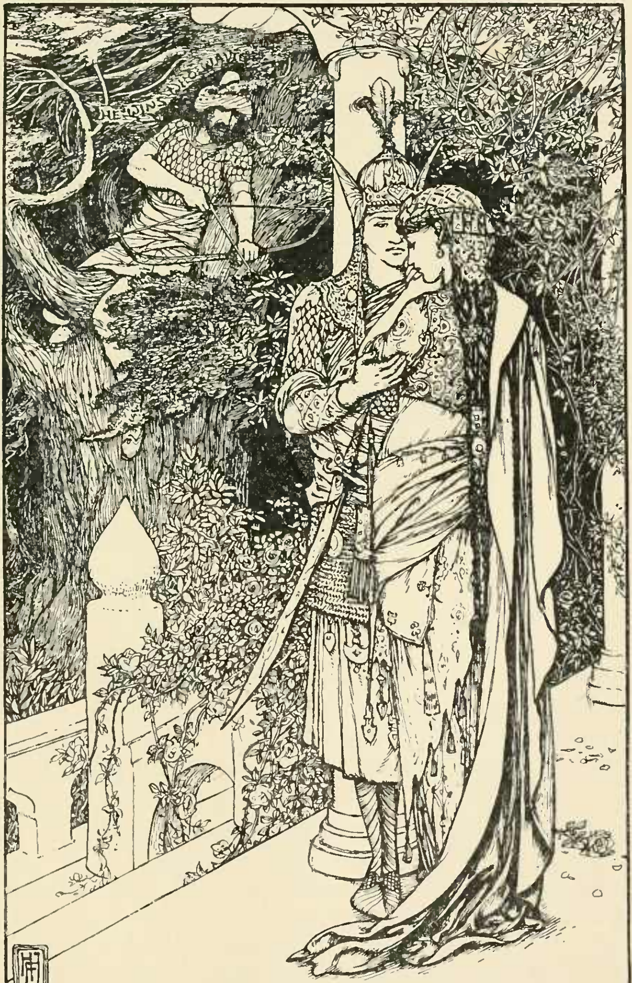
At these words the king's face fell. Having once seen the ruby he could not bear to part with it, yet all the money in his treasury would not be enough to buy it. So for a little while he remained silent, wondering what offer he could make the old woman, and at last he said:

'If I cannot give you its worth in money, is there anything you will take in exchange?'

'A paper signed by your hand, and sealed with your seal, proclaiming that I may do what I will, without let or hindrance,' answered she promptly. And the king, delighted to have obtained what he coveted at so small a cost, gave her the paper without delay. Then the old woman took her leave and returned home.

The fame of this wonderful ruby soon spread far and wide, and envoys arrived at the little house to know if there were more stones to sell. Each king was so anxious to gain possession of the treasure that he bade his messenger outbid all the rest, and so the princess sold the two remaining stones for a sum of money so large that if the gold pieces had been spread out they would have reached from here to the moon. The first thing she did was to build a palace by the side of the cottage, and it was raised on pillars of gold, in which were set great diamonds, which blazed night and day. Of course the news of this palace was the first thing that reached the king her father, on his return from the wars, and he hurried to see it. In the doorway stood a young man of twenty, who was his grandson, though neither of them knew it, and so pleased was the king with the appearance of the youth, that he carried him back to his own palace, and made him commander of the whole army.

Not long after this, the widow's son returned to his native land. There, sure enough, was the tiny cottage where he had lived with his mother, but the gorgeous building beside it was quite new to him. What had become of his wife and his mother, and who could be dwelling in that other wonderful place? These were the first thoughts that flashed through his mind; but not wishing to betray himself by asking questions of passing strangers, he climbed up into a tree that stood opposite the palace and watched.



BLIND·RAGE·FILLED·THE·HEART·OF·THE·WATCHER

By-and-by a lady came out, and began to gather some of the roses and jessamine that hung about the porch. The twenty years that had passed since he had last beheld her vanished in an instant, and he knew her to be his own wife, looking almost as young and beautiful as on the day of their parting. He was about to jump down from the tree and hasten to her side, when she was joined by a young man who placed his arm affectionately round her neck. At this sight the angry husband drew his bow, but before he could let fly the arrow, the counsel of the wise man came back to him: 'Patience is the first step on the road to happiness.' And he laid it down again.

At this moment the princess turned, and drawing her companion's head down to hers, kissed him on each cheek. A second time blind rage filled the heart of the watcher, and he snatched up his bow from the branch where it hung, when words, heard long since, seemed to sound in his ears:

'He wins who waits.' And the bow dropped to his side. Then, through the silent air came the sound of the youth's voice:

'Mother, can you tell me nothing about my father? Does he still live, and will he never return to us?'

'Alas! my son, how can I answer you?' replied the lady. 'Twenty years have passed since he left us to make his fortune, and, in that time, only once have I heard aught of him. But what has brought him to your mind just now?'

'Because last night I dreamed that he was here,' said the youth, 'and then I remembered what I have so long forgotten, that I *had* a father, though even his very history was strange to me. And now, tell me, I pray you, all you can concerning him.'

And standing under the jessamine, the son learnt his father's history, and the man in the tree listened also.

'Oh,' exclaimed the youth, when it was ended, while he twisted his hands in pain, 'I am general-in-chief, you are the king's daughter, and we have the most splendid palace in the whole world, yet my father lives we know not where, and for all we can guess, may be poor and miserable. To-morrow I will ask the king to give me soldiers, and I will seek him over the whole earth till I find him.'

Then the man came down from the tree, and clasped his wife and son in his arms. All that night they talked, and when the sun rose it still found them talking. But as soon as it was proper, he went up to the palace to pay his homage to the king, and to inform him of all that had happened and who they all really were. The king was overjoyed to think that his daughter, whom he had long since forgiven and sorely missed, was living at his gates, and was, besides, the mother of the youth who was so dear to him. 'It was written beforehand,' cried the monarch. 'You are my son-in-law before the world, and shall be king after me.'

And the man bowed his head.

He had waited; and he had won.

[From *Contes Arméniens*. Par Frédéric Macler.]

THE STEEL CANE

Once upon a time there lived an old woman who had a small cottage on the edge of the forest. Behind the cottage was a garden in which all sorts of vegetables grew, and, beyond that, a field with two or three cows in it, so her neighbours considered her quite rich, and envied her greatly.

As long as she was strong enough to work all day in her garden the old woman never felt lonely, but after a while she had a bad illness, which left her much weaker than before, and she began to think that now and then it would be nice to have someone to speak to. Just at this moment she heard of the death of a shepherd and his wife, who dwelt on the other side of the plain, leaving a little boy quite alone in the world.

'That will just suit me,' she said; and sent a man over to bring the child, whom she intended to adopt for her own.

Now the boy, who was about twelve years old, ought to have considered himself very lucky, for his new mother was as kind to him as the old one. But, unfortunately, he made friends with some bad rude companions whose tricks caused them to be a terror to everyone, and the poor old woman never ceased regretting her lost solitude.

Things went on in this way for some years, till the boy became a man.

'Perhaps, if he were to be married he might sober down,' she thought to herself. And she inquired among the neighbours what girls there were of an age to choose from. At length one was found, good and industrious, as well as pretty; and as the young man raised no objections the wedding took place at once, and the bride and bridegroom went to live in the cottage with the old woman. But no change was to be seen in the husband's conduct. All day long he was out amusing himself in the company of his former friends, and if his wife dared to say anything to him on his return home he beat her with his stick. And next year, when a baby was born to them, he beat it also.

At length the old woman's patience was worn out. She saw that it was quite useless to expect the lazy, idle creature to mend his ways, and one day she said to him:

'Do you mean to go on like this for ever? Remember, you are no longer a boy, and it is time that you left off behaving like one. Come, shake off your bad habits, and work for your wife and child, and above all, stop beating them. If not I will transform you into an ass, and heavy loads shall be piled on your back, and men shall ride you. Briars shall be your food, a goad shall prick you, and in your turn you shall know how it feels to be beaten.'

But if she expected her words to do any good she soon found out her mistake, for the young man only grew angry and cried rudely:

'Bah! hold your tongue, or I will whip you also.'

'*Will* you?' she answered grimly; and, swift as lightning, she picked up a steel cane that stood in the corner and laid it across his shoulders. In an instant his ears had grown long and his face longer, his arms had become legs, and his body was covered with close grey hair. Truly, he was an ass; and a very ugly one, too!

'Leave the house!' commanded the old woman. And, shambling awkwardly, he went.

As he was standing in the path outside, not knowing what to do, a man passed by.

'Ho! my fine fellow, you are exactly what I was looking for! You don't seem to have a master, so come with me. I will find something for you to do.' And taking him by the ear he led him from the cottage.

For seven years the ass led a hard life, just as the old woman had foretold. But instead of remembering that he had brought all his suffering on himself, and being sorry for his evil ways, he grew harder, and more bitter. At the end of the seven years his ass skin wore out, and he became a man again, and one day returned to the cottage.

His wife opened the door in answer to his knock; then, letting fall the latch she ran inside, crying:

'Grandmother! grandmother! your son has come back!'

'I thought he would,' replied the old woman, going on with her spinning. 'Well, we could have done very well without him. But as he is here I suppose he must come in.'

And come in he did. But as the old woman expected, he behaved still worse than before. For some weeks she allowed him to do what he liked; then at last she said:

'So experience has taught you nothing! After all, there are very few people who have sense to learn by it. But take care lest I change you into a wolf, to be a prey for dogs and men!'

'You talk too much. I shall break your head for you!' was all the answer she got.

Had the young man looked at her face he might have taken warning, but he was busy making a pipe, and took no notice. The next moment the steel cane had touched his shoulders, and a big grey wolf bounded through the door.

Oh! what a yapping among the dogs, and what a shouting among the neighbours as they gave chase.

For seven years he led the life of a hunted animal, often cold and nearly always hungry, and never daring to allow himself a sound sleep. At the end of that time his wolf skin wore out also, and again he appeared at the cottage door. But the second seven years had taught him no more than the first—his conduct was worse than before; and one day he beat his wife and son so brutally that they screamed to the old woman to come to their aid.

She did, and brought the steel cane with her. In a second the ruffian had vanished, and a big black crow was flying about the room, crying 'Gour! Gour!'

The window was open, and he darted through it; and seeking the companions who had ruined him, he managed to make them understand what had happened.

'We will avenge you,' said they; and taking up a rope, set out to strangle the old woman.

But she was ready for them. One stroke of her cane and they were all changed into a troop of black crows, and *this* time their feathers are lasting still.

[From *Contes Arméniens*. Par Frédéric Macler.]

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE FAIRY GANGANA

Once upon a time there lived a king and queen who ruled over a country so small that you could easily walk round it in one day. They were both very good, simple people; not very wise, perhaps, but anxious to be kind to everybody; and this was often a mistake, for the king allowed all his subjects to talk at once, and offer advice upon the government of the kingdom as well as upon private matters. And the end of it all was, that it was very difficult to get any laws made, and, still more, to get anyone to obey them.

Now, no traveller ever passed through the kingdom without inquiring how it came to be so small. And this was the reason. As soon as Petaldo (for that was the king's name) had been born, his father and mother betrothed him to the niece of their friend the fairy Gangana—if she should ever have one. But as the years passed on, and Gangana was still without a niece, the young prince forgot all about his destined bride, and when he was twenty-five he secretly married the beautiful daughter of a rich farmer, with whom he had fallen violently in love.

When the fairy heard the news she fell into a violent rage, and hurried off to tell the king. The old man thought in his heart that his son had waited quite long enough; but he did not dare to say so, lest some dreadful spell might be thrown over them all, and they should be changed into birds or snakes, or, worst of all, into stones. So, much against his will, he was obliged to disinherit the young man, and to forbid him to come to court. Indeed, he would have been a beggar had it not been for the property his wife had had given her by the farmer, which the youth obtained permission to erect into a kingdom.

Most princes would have been very angry at this treatment, especially as the old king soon died, and the queen was delighted to reign in his place. But Petaldo was a contented young man, and was quite satisfied with arranging his tiny court on the model of his father's, and having a lord chamberlain, and a high steward and several gentlemen in attendance; while the young queen appointed her own ladies-in-waiting and maids of honour. He likewise set up a mint to coin money, and chose a seneschal as head of the five policemen who kept order in the capital and punished the boys who were caught in the act of throwing stones at the palace windows.

The first to fill this important office was the young king's father-in-law, an excellent man of the name of Caboche. He was much beloved by everyone, and so sensible that he was not at all vain at rising at once to the dignity of seneschal, when he had only been a common farmer, but went about his fields every day as usual. This conduct so struck his king that very soon he never did anything without consulting him.

Each morning Caboche and his son-in-law had breakfast together, and when they had finished, the king took out of his iron chest great bundles of state papers, which he desired to talk over with his seneschal. Sometimes they would spend two hours at least in deciding these important matters, but more often after a few minutes Caboche would say:

'Excuse me, sire, but your majesty does not understand this affair in the least. Leave it to me, and I will settle it.'

'But what am I to do, then?' asked the king. And his minister answered:

'Oh, you can rule your wife, and see after your fruit garden. You will find that those two things will take up all your time.'

'Well, perhaps you are right,' the king replied; secretly glad to be rid of the cares of government. But though Caboche did all the work, Petaldo never failed to appear on grand occasions, in his royal mantle of red linen, holding a sceptre of gilded wood. Meanwhile he passed his mornings in studying books, from which he learned the proper seasons to plant his fruit trees, and when they should be pruned; and his afternoons in his garden, where he put his knowledge into practice. In the evening he played cards with his father-in-law, and supped in public with the queen, and by ten o'clock everybody in the palace was fast asleep.

The queen, on her side, was quite as happy as her husband. She loved to be in her dairy, and nobody in the kingdom could make such delicious cheeses. But however busy she might be, she never forgot to bake a little barley cake, and make a tiny cream cheese, and to put them under a particular rose-tree in the garden. If you had asked her whom they were for, and where they went to, she could not have told you, but would have said that on the night of her marriage a fairy had appeared to her in a dream, and had bidden her to perform this ceremony.

After the king and the queen had six children, a little boy was born, with a small red cap on his head, so that he was quite different from his brothers and sisters, and his parents loved Cadichon better than any of them.

The years went on, and the children were growing big, when, one day, after Gillette the queen had finished baking her cake, and had turned it out on a plate, a lovely blue mouse crept up the leg of the table and ran to the plate. Instead of chasing it away, as most women would have done, the queen pretended not to notice what the mouse was doing, and was much surprised to see the little creature pick up the cake and carry it off to the chimney. She sprang forwards to stop it, when, suddenly, both the mouse and cake vanished, and in their place stood an old woman only a foot high, whose clothes hung in rags about her. Taking up a sharp pointed iron stick, she drew on the earthen floor some strange signs, uttering seven cries as she did so, and murmuring something in a low voice, among which the queen was sure she caught the words, ‘faith,’ ‘wisdom,’ ‘happiness.’ Then, seizing the kitchen broom, she whirled it three times round her head, and vanished. Immediately there arose a great noise in the next room, and on opening the door, the queen beheld three large cockchafers, each one with a princess between its feet, while the princes were seated on the backs of three swallows. In the middle was a car formed of a single pink shell, and drawn by two robin redbreasts, and in this car Cadichon was sitting by the side of the blue mouse, who was dressed in a splendid mantle of black velvet fastened under her chin. Before the queen had recovered from her surprise, cockchafers, redbreasts, mouse and children had all flown, singing, to the window, and disappeared from view.

The loud shrieks of the queen brought her husband and father running into the room, and when at last they made out from her broken sentences what had really happened, they hastily snatched up some stout sticks that were lying about and set off to the rescue—one going in one direction and the other in another.

For at least an hour the queen sat sobbing where they had left her, when at last she was roused by a piece of folded paper falling at her feet. She stooped and picked it up eagerly, hoping that it might contain some news of her lost children. It was very short, but when she had read the few words, Gillette was comforted, for it bade her take heart, as they were well and happy under the protection of a fairy. 'On your own faith and prudence depend your happiness,' ended the writer. 'It is I who have all these years eaten the food you placed under the rose-tree, and some day I shall reward you for it. "Everything comes to him who knows how to wait," is the advice given by,—The Fairy of the Fields.'

Then the queen rose up, and bathed her face, and combed her shining hair; and as she turned away from her mirror she beheld a linnet sitting on her bed. No one would have known that it was anything but a common linnet, and yesterday the queen would have thought so too. But this morning so many wonderful things had happened that she did not doubt for a moment that the writer of the letter was before her.

'Pretty linnet,' said she, 'I will try to do all you wish. Only give me, I pray you, now and then, news of my little Cadichon.'

And the linnet flapped her wings and sang, and flew away. So the queen knew that she had guessed rightly, and thanked her in her heart.

By-and-by the king and his seneschal returned, hungry and tired with their fruitless search. They were amazed and rather angry to find the queen, whom they had left weeping, quite cheerful. Could she *really* care for her children so little and have forgotten them so soon? What *could* have caused this sudden change? But to all their questions Gillette would only answer: 'Everything comes to him who knows how to wait.'

'That is true,' replied her father; 'and, after all, your majesty must remember that the revenues of your kingdom would hardly bear the cost of seven princes and princesses brought up according to their rank. Be grateful, then, to those who have relieved you of the burden.'

'You are right! You are always right!' cried the king, whose face once more beamed with smiles. And life at the palace went on as before, till Petaldo received a piece of news which disturbed him greatly.

The queen, his mother, who had for some time been a widow, suddenly made up her mind to marry again, and her choice had fallen on the young king of the Green Isles, who was younger than her own son, and, besides, handsome and fond of pleasure, which Petaldo was not. Now the grandmother, foolish though she was in many respects, had the sense to see that a woman as old and as plain as she was, could hardly expect a young man to fall in love with her, and that, if this was to happen, it would be needful to find some spell which would bring back her youth and beauty. Of course, the fairy Gangana could have wrought the change with one wave of her wand; but unluckily the two were no longer friends, because the fairy had tried hard to persuade the queen to declare her niece heiress to the crown, which the queen refused to do. Naturally, therefore, it was no use asking the help of Gangana to enable the queen to take a second husband, who would be certain to succeed her; and messengers were sent all over the neighbouring kingdoms, seeking to find a witch or a fairy who would work the wished-for miracle. None, however, could be found with sufficient skill, and at length the queen saw that if ever the king of the Green Isles was to be her husband she must throw herself on the mercy of the fairy Gangana.

The fairy's wrath was great when she heard the queen's story, but she knew very well that, as the king of the Green Isles had spent all his money, he would probably be ready to marry even an old woman, like her friend, in order to get more. So, in order to gain time, she hid her feelings, and told the queen that in three days the spell would be accomplished.

Her words made the queen so happy that twenty years seemed to fall from her at once, and she counted, not only the hours, but the minutes to the appointed time. It came at last, and the fairy stood before her in a long robe of pink and silver, held up by a tiny brown dwarf, who carried a small box under his arm. The queen received her with all the marks of respect that she could think of, and at the request of Gangana, ordered the doors and windows of the great hall to be closed, and her attendants to retire, so that she and her guest might be quite alone. Then, opening the box, which was presented to her on one knee by the dwarf, the fairy took from it a small vellum book with silver clasps, a wand that lengthened out as you touched it, and a crystal bottle filled with very clear green water. She next bade the queen sit on a seat in the middle of the room, and the dwarf to stand opposite her, after which she stooped down and drew three circles round them with a golden rod, touched each of them thrice with her wand, and sprinkled the liquid over both. Gradually the queen's big features began to grow smaller and her face fresher, while at the same time the dwarf became about twice as tall as he had been before. This sight, added to the blue flames which sprang up from the three circles, so frightened the queen that she fainted in her chair, and when she recovered, both the page and the fairy had vanished.

At first she felt vaguely puzzled, not remembering clearly what had happened; then it all came back to her, and jumping up she ran to the nearest mirror. Oh! how happy she was! Her long nose and her projecting teeth had become things of beauty, her hair was thick and curly, and bright gold. The fairy had indeed fulfilled her promise! But, in her hurry and pleasure, the queen never noticed that she had not been changed into a beautiful young lady, but into a very tall little girl of eight or nine years old! Instead of her magnificent velvet dress, edged with fur and embroidered in gold, she wore a straight muslin frock, with a little lace apron, while her hair, which was always combed and twisted and fastened with diamond pins, hung in curls down her back. But if she had only known, something besides this had befallen her, for except as regards her love for the king of the Green Isles, her mind as well as her face had become that of a child, and this her courtiers were aware of, if she was not. Of course they could not imagine what had occurred, and did not know how to behave themselves, till the chief minister set them the example by ordering his wife and daughters to copy the queen's clothes and way of speaking. Then, in a short time, the whole court, including the men, talked and dressed like children, and played with dolls, or little tin soldiers, while at the state dinners nothing was seen but iced fruits, or sweet cakes made in the shape of birds and horses. But whatever she might be doing, the queen hardly ceased talking about the king of the Green Isles, whom she always spoke of as 'my little husband,' and as weeks passed on, and he did not come, she began to get very cross and impatient, so that her courtiers kept away from her as much as they could. By this time, too, they were growing tired of pretending to be children, and whispered their intention of leaving the palace and taking service under a neighbouring sovereign, when, one day, a loud blast of trumpets announced the arrival of the long-expected guest. In an instant all was smiles again, and in spite of the strictest rules of court etiquette, the queen insisted on receiving the young king at the bottom of the stairs. Unfortunately, in her haste, she fell over her dress, and rolled down several steps, screaming like a child, from fright. She was not really much hurt, though she had scratched her nose and bruised her forehead, but she was obliged to be carried to her room and have her face bathed in cold water. Still, in spite of this, she gave strict orders that the king should be brought to her presence the moment he entered the palace.

A shrill blast outside her door sent a twinge of pain through the queen's head, which by this time was aching badly; but in her joy at welcoming her future husband she paid no heed to it. Between two lines of courtiers, bowing low, the young king advanced quickly; but at the sight of the queen and her bandages, broke out into such violent fits of laughter that he was forced to leave the room, and even the palace.

When the queen had recovered from the vexation caused by the king's rude behaviour, she bade her attendants to hasten after him and fetch him back, but no promises or entreaties would persuade him to return. This of course made the queen's temper even worse than it was before, and a plot was set on foot to deprive her of the crown, which would certainly have succeeded had not the fairy Gangana, who had only wished to prevent her marriage, restored her to her proper shape. But, far from thanking her friend for this service, the sight of her old face in the mirror filled her with despair; and from that day she hated Gangana with a deadly hatred.

And where were Petaldo's children all this while? Why, in the island of Bambini, where they had playfellows to their hearts' content, and plenty of fairies to take care of them all. But out of all the seven princes and princesses whom the queen had seen carried off through the window, there was only Cadichon who was good and obedient; the other six were so rude and quarrelsome that they could get no one to play with them, and at last, as a punishment, the fairy changed them all into marionettes, till they should learn to behave better.

Now, in an unlucky moment, the Fairy of the Fields determined to visit her friend the queen of the fairies, who lived in a distant island, in order to consult her as to what was to become of Cadichon.

As she was entering the Hall of Audience, Gangana was leaving it, and sharp words were exchanged between them. After her enemy had flown off in a rage, the Fairy of the Fields poured out the whole story of Gangana's wickedness to the queen, and implored her counsel.

'Be comforted,' answered the fairy queen. 'For a while she must work her will, and at this moment she is carrying off Cadichon to the island where she still holds her niece captive. But should she make an evil use of the power she has, her punishment will be swift and great. And now I will give you this precious phial. Guard it carefully, for the liquid it contains will cause you to become invisible, and safe from the piercing eyes of all fairies. Against the eyes of mortals it has no charm!'

With a heart somewhat lighter, the Fairy of the Fields returned to her own island, and, the better to protect the six new marionettes from the wicked fairy, she sprinkled them with a few drops of the liquid, only avoiding just the tips of their noses, so that she might be able to know them again. Then she set off for the kingdom of Petaldo, which she found in a state of revolt, because for the first time since he had ascended the throne he had dared to impose a tax. Indeed, matters might have ended in a war, or in cutting off the king's head, had not the fairy discovered a means of contenting everybody, and of whispering anew to the queen that all was well with her children, for she dared not tell her of the loss of Cadichon.

And what had become of Cadichon? Well, the Fairy of the Fields had found out—by means of her books, which had told her—that the poor little boy had been placed by Gangana in an enchanted island, round which flowed a rapid river, sweeping rocks and trees in its current. Besides the river, the island was guarded by twenty-four enormous dragons, breathing flames, and forming a rampart of fire which it seemed as if none could pass.

The Fairy of the Fields knew all this, but she had a brave heart, and determined that by some means or other she would overcome all obstacles, and rescue Cadichon from the power of Gangana. So, taking with her the water of invisibility, she sprinkled it over her, and mounting her favourite winged lizard, set out for the island. When it appeared in sight she wrapped herself in her fireproof mantle; then, bidding the lizard return home, she slipped past the dragons and entered the island.

Scarcely had she done so than she beheld Gangana approaching her, talking loudly and angrily to a genius who flew by her side. From what she said, the fairy learned that Petaldo's mother, the old queen, had died of rage on hearing of the marriage of the king of the Green Isles to a young and lovely bride, and instead of leaving her kingdom to Gangana, had bequeathed it to one of the children of her son Petaldo.

'But all the trouble I have had with that foolish old woman shall not go for nothing,' cried Gangana. 'Go at once to my stables, and fetch out the strongest and swiftest griffins you can find in the stalls, and harness them to the yellow coach. Drive this, with all the speed you may, to the Isle of Bambini, and carry off the six children of Petaldo that are still there. I will see to Petaldo and Gillette myself. When I have got them all safe here I will change the parents into rabbits and the children into dogs. As for Cadichon, I have not quite made up my mind what I shall do with him.'

The Fairy of the Fields did not wait to hear more. No time was to be lost in seeking the help of the fairy queen if Petaldo and his family were to be saved from this dreadful doom. So, without waiting to summon her lizard, she flew across the island and past the dragons till her feet once more touched the ground again. But at that instant a black cloud rolled over her, loud thunder rent the air, and the earth rocked beneath her. Then wild lightnings lit up the sky, and by their flashes she saw the four-and-twenty dragons fighting together, uttering shrieks and yells, till the whole earth must have heard the uproar. Trembling with terror, the fairy stood rooted to the spot; and when day broke, island, torrent, and dragons had vanished, and in their stead was a barren rock. On the summit of the rock stood a black ostrich, and on its back were seated Cadichon, and the little niece of the fairy Gangana, for whose sake she had committed so many evil deeds. While the Fairy of the Fields was gazing in surprise at this strange sight, the ostrich spread its wings and flew off in the direction of the Fortunate Isle, and, followed unseen by the good fairy, entered the great hall where the queen was sitting on her throne.

Proud and exultant was Gangana in her new shape, for, by all the laws of fairydom, if she succeeded in laying Cadichon at the feet of the queen, and received him back from her, he was in her power for life, and she might do with him as she would. This the good fairy knew well, and pressed on with all her strength, for the dreadful events of the night had almost exhausted her. But, with a mighty effort, she snatched the children away from the back of the ostrich, and placed them on the lap of the queen.

With a scream of baffled rage the ostrich turned away, and Gangana stood in her place, waiting for the doom which she had brought upon herself.

'You have neglected all my warnings,' said the queen, speaking more sternly than any fairy had ever heard her; 'and my sentence is that during two hundred years you lose all your privileges as a fairy, and under the form of an ostrich shall become the slave of the lowest and wickedest of the genii whom you have made your friends. As for these children, I shall keep them with me, and they shall be brought up at my court.'

And so they were, until they grew up and were old enough to be married. Then the Fairy of the Fields took them back to the kingdom of the old queen, where Petaldo was now reigning. But the cares of state proved too heavy both for him and Gillette, after the quiet life they had led for so many years, and they were rejoiced to be able to lay aside their crowns, and place them on the heads of Cadichon and his bride, who was as good as she was beautiful, though she *was* the niece of the wicked Gangana! And so well had Cadichon learned the lessons taught him at the court of the fairy queen, that never since the kingdom *was* a kingdom had the people been so well governed or so happy. And they went about the streets and the fields smiling with joy at the difference between the old times and the new, and whispering softly to each other:

'Everything comes to him who knows how to wait.'

[From *Le Cabinet des Fées*.]

THE SILENT PRINCESS

Once upon a time there lived in Turkey a pasha who had only one son, and so dearly did he love this boy that he let him spend the whole day amusing himself, instead of learning how to be useful like his friends.

Now the boy's favourite toy was a golden ball, and with this he would play from morning till night, without troubling anybody. One day, as he was sitting in the summer-house in the garden, making his ball run all along the walls and catching it again, he noticed an old woman with an earthen pitcher coming to draw water from a well which stood in a corner of the garden. In a moment he had caught his ball and flung it straight at the pitcher, which fell to the ground in a thousand pieces. The old woman started with surprise, but said nothing; only turned round to fetch another pitcher, and as soon as she had disappeared, the boy hurried out to pick up his ball. Scarcely was he back in the summer-house when he beheld the old woman a second time, approaching the well with the pitcher on her shoulder. She had just taken hold of the handle to lower it into the water, when—crash! And the pitcher lay in fragments at her feet. Of course she felt very angry, but for fear of the pasha she still held her peace, and spent her last pence in buying a fresh pitcher. But when this also was broken by a blow from the ball, her wrath burst forth, and shaking her fist towards the summer-house where the boy was hiding, she cried:

'I wish you may be punished by falling in love with the silent princess.' And having said this she vanished.

For some time the boy paid no heed to her words—indeed he forgot them altogether; but as years went by, and he began to think more about things, the remembrance of the old woman's wish came back to his mind.

'Who is the silent princess? And why should it be a punishment to fall in love with her?' he asked himself, and received no answer. However, that did not prevent him from putting the question again and again, till at length he grew so weak and ill that he could eat nothing, and in the end was forced to lie in bed altogether. His father the pasha became so frightened by this strange disease, that he sent for every physician in the kingdom to cure him, but no one was able to find a remedy.

'How did your illness first begin, my son?' asked the pasha one day. 'Perhaps, if we knew that, we should also know better what to do for you.'

Then the youth told him what had happened all those years before, when he was a little boy, and what the old woman had said to him.

'Give me, I pray you,' he cried, when his tale was finished, 'give me, I pray you, leave to go into the world in search of the princess, and perhaps this evil state may cease.' And, sore though his heart was to part from his only son, the pasha felt that the young man would certainly die if he remained at home any longer.

'Go, and peace be with you,' he answered; and went out to call his trusted steward, whom he ordered to accompany his young master.

Their preparations were soon made, and early one morning the two set out. But neither old man nor young had the slightest idea of where they were going, or what they were undertaking. First they lost their way in a dense forest, and from that they at length emerged in a wilderness where they wandered for six months, not seeing a living creature and finding scarcely anything to eat or drink, till they became nothing but skin and bone, while their garments hung in tatters about them. They had forgotten all about the princess, and their only wish was to find themselves back in the palace again, when, one day, they discovered that they were standing on the shoulder of a mountain. The stones beneath them shone as brightly as diamonds, and both their hearts beat with joy at beholding a tiny old man approaching them. The sight awoke all manner of recollections; the numb feeling that had taken possession of them fell away as if by magic, and it was with glad voices that they greeted the new-comer. 'Where are we, my friend?' asked they; and the old man told them that this was the mountain where the sultan's daughter sat, covered by seven veils, and the shining of the stones was only the reflection of her own brilliance.

On hearing this news all the dangers and difficulties of their past wandering vanished from their minds.

'How can I reach her soonest?' asked the youth eagerly. But the old man only answered:

'Have patience, my son, yet awhile. Another six months must go by before you arrive at the palace where she dwells with the rest of the women. And, even so, think well, when you can, as should you fail to make her speak, you will have to pay forfeit with your life, as others have done. So beware!'

But the prince only laughed at this counsel—as others had also done.

After three months they found themselves on the top of another mountain, and the prince saw with surprise that its sides were coloured a beautiful red. Perched on some cliffs, not far off, was a small village, and the prince proposed to his friend that they should go and rest there. The villagers, on their part, welcomed them gladly, and gave them food to eat and beds to sleep on, and thankful indeed were the two travellers to repose their weary limbs.

The next morning they asked their host if he could tell them whether they were still many days' journey from the princess, and whether he knew why the mountain was so much redder than other mountains.

'For three and a half more months you must still pursue your way,' answered he, 'and by that time you will find yourselves at the gate of the princess's palace. As for the colour of the mountain, that comes from the soft hue of her cheeks and mouth, which shines through the seven veils which cover her. But none have ever beheld her face, for she sits there, uttering no word, though one hears whispers of many having lost their lives for her sake.'

The prince, however, would listen no further; and thanking the man for his kindness, he jumped up and, with the steward, set out to climb the mountain.

On and on and on they went, sleeping under the trees or in caves, and living upon berries and any fish they could catch in the rivers. But at length, when their clothes were nearly in rags and their legs so tired that they could hardly walk any further, they saw on the top of the next mountain a palace of yellow marble.

'There it is, at last,' cried the prince; and fresh blood seemed to spring in his veins. But as he and his companion began to climb towards the top they paused in horror, for the ground was white with dead men's skulls. It was the prince who first recovered his voice, and he said to his friend, as carelessly as he could:

'These must be the skulls of the men who tried to make the princess speak and failed. Well, if we fail too, our bones will strew the ground likewise.'

'Oh! turn back now, my prince, while there is yet time,' entreated his companion. 'Your father gave you into my charge; but when we set out I did not know that certain death lay before us.'

'Take heart, O Lala, take heart!' answered the prince. 'A man can but die once. And, besides, the princess will have to speak *some* day, you know.'

So they went on again, past skulls and dead men's bones in all degrees of whiteness. And by-and-by they reached another village, where they determined to rest for a little while, so that their wits might be fresh and bright for the task that lay before them. But this time, though the people were kind and friendly, their faces were gloomy, and every now and then woeful cries would rend the air.

'Oh! my brother, have I lost you?' 'Oh! my son, shall I see you no more?' And then, as the prince and his companion asked the meaning of these laments—which, indeed, was plain enough—the answer was given:

'Ah, you also have come hither to die! This town belongs to the father of the princess, and when any rash man seeks to move the princess to speech he must first obtain leave of the sultan. If that is granted him he is then led into the presence of the princess. What happens afterwards, perhaps the sight of these bones may help you to guess.'

The young man bowed his head in token of thanks, and stood thoughtful for a short time. Then, turning to the Lala, he said:

'Well, our destiny will soon be decided! Meanwhile we will find out all we can, and do nothing rashly.'

For two or three days they wandered about the bazaars, keeping their eyes and ears open, when, one morning, they met a man carrying a nightingale in a cage. The bird was singing so joyously that the prince stopped to listen, and at once offered to buy him from his owner.

'Oh, why cumber yourself with such a useless thing,' cried the Lala in disgust; 'have you not enough to occupy your hands and mind, without taking an extra burden?' But the prince, who liked having his own way, paid no heed to him, and paying the high price asked by the man, he carried the bird back to the inn, and hung him up in his chamber. That evening, as he was sitting alone, trying to think of something that would make the princess talk, and failing altogether, the nightingale pecked open his cage door, which was lightly fastened by a stick, and, perching on his shoulder, murmured softly in his ear:

'What makes you so sad, my prince?' The young man started. In his native country birds did not talk, and, like many people, he was always rather afraid of what he did not understand. But in a moment he felt ashamed of his folly, and explained that he had travelled for more than a year, and over thousands of miles, to win the hand of the sultan's daughter. And now that he had reached his goal he could think of no plan to force her to speak.

'Oh! do not trouble your head about that,' replied the bird, 'it is quite easy! Go this evening to the women's apartments, and take me with you, and when you enter the princess's private chamber hide me under the pedestal which supports the great golden candlestick. The princess herself will be wrapped so thickly in her seven veils that she can see nothing, neither can her face be seen by anyone. Then inquire after her health, but she will remain quite silent; and next say that you are sorry to have disturbed her, and that you will have a little talk with the pedestal of the candlestick. When you speak I will answer.'

The prince threw his mantle over the bird, and started for the palace, where he begged an audience of the sultan. This was soon granted him, and leaving the nightingale hidden by the mantle, in a dark corner outside the door, he walked up to the throne on which his highness was sitting, and bowed low before him.

'What is your request?' asked the sultan, looking closely at the young man, who was tall and handsome; but when he heard the tale he shook his head pityingly.

'If you can make her speak she shall be your wife,' answered he; 'but if not—did you mark the skulls that strewed the mountain side?'

'Some day a man is bound to break the spell, O sultan,' replied the youth boldly; 'and why should not I be he as well as another? At any rate, my word is pledged, and I cannot draw back now.'

'Well, go if you must,' said the sultan. And he bade his attendants lead the way to the chamber of the princess, but to allow the young man to enter alone.

Catching up, unseen, his mantle and the cage as they passed into the dark corridor—for by this time night was coming on—the youth found himself standing in a room bare except for a pile of silken cushions, and one tall golden candlestick. His heart beat high as he looked at the cushions, and knew that, shrouded within the shining veils that covered them, lay the much longed-for princess. Then, fearful that after all other eyes might be watching him, he hastily placed the nightingale under the open pedestal on which the candlestick was resting, and turning again he steadied his voice, and besought the princess to tell him of her well-being.

Not by even a movement of her hand did the princess show that she had heard, and the young man, who of course expected this, went on to speak of his travels and of the strange countries he had passed through; but not a sound broke the silence.

'I see clearly that you are interested in none of these things,' said he at last, 'and as I have been forced to hold my peace for so many months, I feel that now I really *must* talk to somebody, so I shall go and address my conversation to the candlestick.' And with that he crossed the room behind the princess, and cried: 'O fairest of candlesticks, how are you?'

'Very well indeed, my lord,' answered the nightingale; 'but I wonder how many years have gone by since any one has spoken with me? And, now that you have come, rest, I pray you, awhile, and listen to my story.'

'Willingly,' replied the youth, curling himself up on the floor, for there was no cushion for him to sit on.

'Once upon a time,' began the nightingale, 'there lived a pasha whose daughter was the most beautiful maiden in the whole kingdom. Suitors she had in plenty, but she was not easy to please, and at length there were only three whom she felt she could even *think* of marrying. Not knowing which of the three she liked best, she took counsel with her father, who summoned the young men into his presence, and then told them that they must each of them learn some trade, and whichever of them proved the cleverest at the end of six months should become the husband of the princess.

'Though the three suitors may have been secretly disappointed, they could not help feeling that this test was quite fair, and left the palace together, talking as they went of what handicrafts they might set themselves to follow. The day was hot, and when they reached a spring that gushed out of the side of the mountain, they stopped to drink and rest, and then one of them said:

'"It will be best that we should each seek our fortunes alone; so let us put our rings under this stone, and go our separate ways. And the first one who returns hither will take his ring, and the others will take theirs. Thus we shall know whether we have all fulfilled the commands of the pasha, or if some accident has befallen any of us."

'"Good," replied the other two. And the three rings were placed in a little hole, and carefully covered again by the stone.

'Then they parted, and for six months they knew naught of each other, till, on the day appointed, they met at the spring. Right glad they all were, and eagerly they talked of what they had done, and how the time had been spent.

'"I think I shall win the princess," said the eldest, with a laugh, "for it is not everybody that is able to accomplish a whole year's journey in an hour!"

'"That is very clever, certainly," answered his friend; "but if you are to govern a kingdom it may be still more useful to have the power of seeing what is happening at a distance; and that is what *I* have learnt," replied the second.

'"No, no, my dear comrades," cried the third, "your trades are all very well; but when the pasha hears that I can bring back the dead to life he will know which of us three is to be his son-in-law. But come, there only remain a few hours of the six months he granted us. It is time that we hastened back to the palace."

'"Stop a moment," said the second, "it would be well to know what is going on in the palace." And plucking some small leaves from a tree near by, he muttered some words and made some signs, and laid them on his eyes. In an instant he turned pale, and uttered a cry.

'"What is it? What is it?" exclaimed the others; and, with a shaking voice, he gasped:

'"The princess is lying on her bed, and has barely a few minutes to live. Oh! can no one save her?"

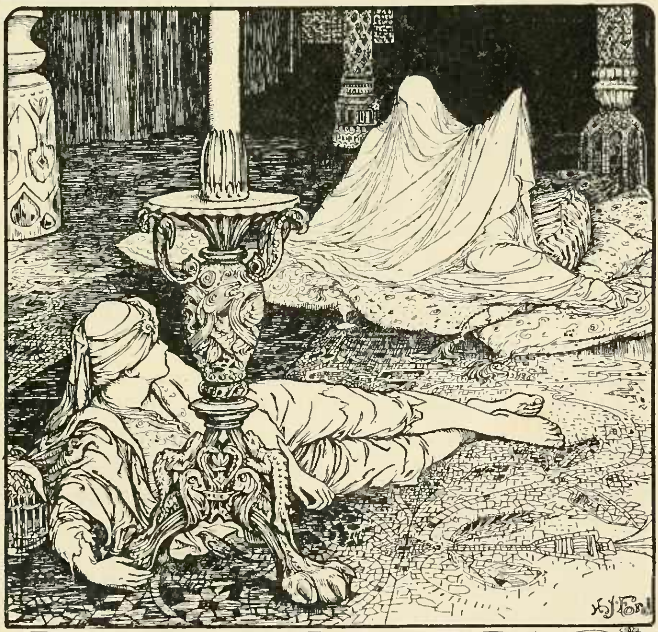
'"*I* can," answered the third, taking a small box from his turban; "this ointment will cure any illness. But how to reach her in time?"

'"Give it to me," said the first. And he wished himself by the bedside of the princess, which was surrounded by the sultan and his weeping courtiers. Clearly there was not a second to lose, for the princess had grown unconscious, and her face cold. Plunging his finger into the ointment he touched her eyes, mouth and ears with the paste, and with beating heart awaited the result.

'It was swifter than he supposed. As he looked the colour came back into her cheeks, and she smiled up at her father. The sultan, almost speechless with joy at this sudden change, embraced his daughter tenderly, and then turned to the young man to whom he owed her life:

'"Are you not one of those three whom I sent forth to learn a trade six months ago?" asked he. And the young man answered yes, and that the other two were even now on their way to the palace, so that the sultan might judge between them.'

At this point in his story the nightingale stopped, and asked the prince which of the three he thought had the best right to the princess.



The Silent Princess speaks at last

'The one who had learned how to prepare the ointment,' replied he.

'But if it had not been for the man who could see what was happening at a distance they would never have known that the princess was ill,' said the nightingale. 'I would give it to *him.*' And the strife between them waxed hot, till, suddenly, the listening princess started up from her cushions and cried:

'Oh, you fools! cannot you understand that if it had not been for him who had power to reach the palace in time the ointment itself would have been useless, for death would have claimed her? It is he and no other who ought to have the princess!'

At the first sound of the princess's voice, a slave, who was standing at the door, ran at full speed to tell the sultan of the miracle which had taken place, and the delighted father hastened to the spot. But by this time the princess perceived that she had fallen into a trap which had been cunningly laid for her, and would not utter another word. All she could be prevailed on to do was to make signs to her father that the man who wished to be her husband must induce her to speak three times. And she smiled to herself beneath her seven veils as she thought of the impossibility of *that*!

When the sultan told the prince that though he had succeeded once, he would have twice to pass through the same test, the young man's face clouded over. It did not seem to him fair play, but he dared not object, so he only bowed low, and contrived to step back close to the spot where the nightingale was hidden. As it was now quite dark he tucked unseen the little cage under his cloak, and left the palace.

'Why are you so gloomy?' asked the nightingale, as soon as they were safely outside. 'Everything has gone exactly right! Of course the princess was very angry with herself for having spoken. And did you see that, at her first words, the veils that covered her began to rend? Take me back to-morrow evening, and place me on the pillar by the lattice. Fear nothing, you have only to trust to me!'

The next evening, towards sunset, the prince left the cage behind him, and with the bird in the folds of his garment slipped into the palace and made his way straight to the princess's apartments. He was at once admitted by the slaves who guarded the door, and took care to pass near the window so that the nightingale hopped unseen to the top of a pillar. Then he turned and bowed low to the princess, and asked her several questions; but, as before, she answered nothing, and, indeed, gave no sign that she heard. After a few minutes the young man bowed again, and crossing over to the window, he said:

'Oh, pillar! it is no use speaking to the princess, she will not utter one word; and as I must talk to somebody, I have come to you. Tell me how you have been all this long while?'

'I thank you,' replied a voice from the pillar, 'I am feeling very well. And it is lucky for me that the princess is silent, or else you would not have wanted to speak to me. To reward you, I will relate to you an interesting tale that I lately overheard, and about which I should like to have your opinion.'

'That will be charming,' answered the prince, 'so pray begin at once.'

'Once upon a time,' said the nightingale, 'there lived a woman who was so beautiful that every man who saw her fell in love with her. But she was very hard to please, and refused to wed any of them, though she managed to keep friends with all. Years passed away in this manner, almost without her noticing them, and one by one the young men grew tired of waiting, and sought wives who may have been less handsome, but were also less proud, and at length only three of her former wooers remained—Baldschi, Jagdschi, and Firedschi. Still she held herself apart, thought herself better and lovelier than other women, when, on a certain evening, her eyes were opened at last to the truth. She was sitting before her mirror, combing her curls, when amongst her raven locks she found a long white hair!

'At this dreadful sight her heart gave a jump, and then stood still.

'"I am growing old," she said to herself, "and if I do not choose a husband soon, I shall never get one! I know that either of those men would gladly marry me to-morrow, but I cannot decide between them. I must invent some way to find out which of them is the best, and lose no time about it."

'So instead of going to sleep, she thought all night long of different plans, and in the morning she arose and dressed herself.

'"That will have to do," she muttered as she pulled out the white hair which had cost her so much trouble. "It is not very good, but I can think of nothing better; and—well, they are none of them clever, and I dare say they will easily fall into the trap." Then she called her slave and bade her let Jagdschi know that she would be ready to receive him in an hour's time. After that she went into the garden and dug a grave under a tree, by which she laid a white shroud.

'Jagdschi was delighted to get the gracious message; and, putting on his newest garments, he hastened to the lady's house, but great was his dismay at finding her stretched on her cushions, weeping bitterly.

'"What is the matter, O Fair One?" he asked, bowing low before her.

'"A terrible thing has happened," said she, her voice choked with sobs. "My father died two nights ago, and I buried him in my garden. But now I find that he was a wizard, and was not dead at all, for his grave is empty and he is wandering about somewhere in the world."

'"That is evil news, indeed," answered Jagdschi; "but can I do nothing to comfort you?"

'"There is one thing you can do," replied she, "and that is to wrap yourself in the shroud and lay yourself in the grave. If he should not return till after three hours have elapsed he will have lost his power over me, and be forced to go and wander elsewhere."

'Now Jagdschi was proud of the trust reposed in him, and wrapping himself in the shroud, he stretched himself at full length in the grave. After some time Baldschi arrived in his turn, and found the lady groaning and lamenting. She told him that her father had been a wizard, and that in case, as was very likely, he should wish to leave his grave and come to work her evil, Baldschi was to take a stone and be ready to crush in his head, if he showed signs of moving.

'Baldschi, enchanted at being able to do his lady a service, picked up a stone, and seated himself by the side of the grave wherein lay Jagdschi.

'Meanwhile the hour arrived in which Firedschi was accustomed to pay his respects, and, as in the case of the other two, he discovered the lady overcome with grief. To him she said that a wizard who was an enemy of her father's had thrown the dead man out of his grave, and had taken his place. "But," she added, "if you can bring the wizard into my presence, all his power will go from him; if not, then I am lost."

'"Ah, lady, what is there that I would not do for you!" cried Firedschi; and running down to the grave, he seized the astonished Jagdschi by the waist, and flinging the body over his shoulder, he hastened with him into the house. At the first moment Baldschi was so surprised at this turn of affairs, for which the lady had not prepared him, that he sat still and did nothing. But by-and-by he sprang up and hurled the stone after the two flying figures, hoping that it might kill them both. Fortunately it touched neither, and soon all three were in the presence of the lady. Then Jagdschi, thinking that he had delivered her from the power of the wizard, slid off the back of Firedschi, and threw the shroud from him.'

'Tell me, my prince,' said the nightingale, when he had finished his story, 'which of the three men deserved to win the lady? I myself should choose Firedschi.'

'No, no,' answered the prince, who understood the wink the bird had given him; 'it was Baldschi who took the most trouble, and it was certainly he who deserved the lady.'

But the nightingale would not agree; and they began to quarrel, till a third voice broke in:

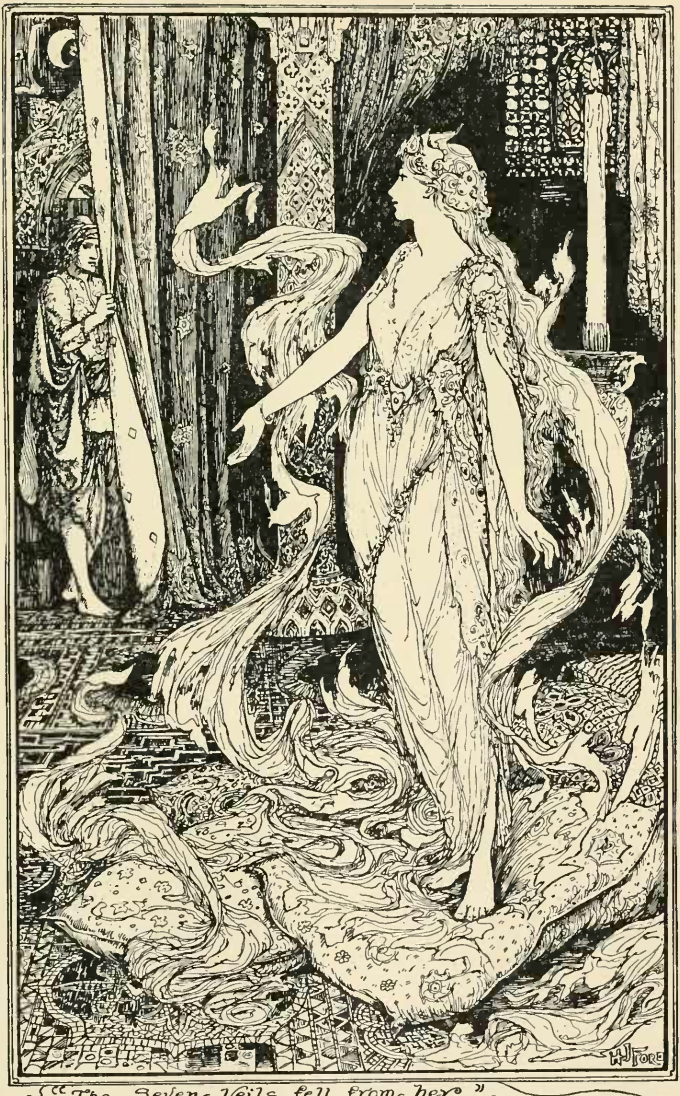
'How can you talk such nonsense?' cried the princess—and as she spoke a sound of tearing was heard. 'Why, you have never even thought of Jagdschi, who lay for three hours in the grave, with a stone held over his head! Of course it was *he* whom the lady chose for her husband!'

It was not many minutes before the news reached the sultan; but even now he would not consent to the marriage till his daughter had spoken a third time. On hearing this, the young man took counsel with the nightingale how best to accomplish this, and the bird told him that as the princess, in her fury at having fallen into the snare laid for her, had ordered the pillar to be broken in pieces, he must be hidden in the folds of a curtain that hung by the door.

The following evening the prince entered the palace, and walked boldly up to the princess's apartments. As he entered the nightingale flew from under his arm and perched himself on top of the door, where he was entirely concealed by the folds of the dark curtain. The young man talked as usual to the princess without obtaining a single word in reply, and at length he left her lying under the heap of shining veils—now rent in many places—and crossed the room towards the door, from which came a voice that gladly answered him.

For a while the two talked together; then the nightingale asked if the prince was fond of stories, as he had lately heard one which interested and perplexed him greatly. In reply, the prince begged that he might hear it at once, and without further delay the nightingale began:

'Once upon a time, a carpenter, a tailor, and a student set out together to see the world. After wandering



"The Seven Veils fell from her".

about for some months they grew tired of travelling, and resolved to stay and rest in a small town that took their fancy. So they hired a little house, and looked about for work to do, returning at sunset to smoke their pipes and talk over the events of the day.

'One night in the middle of summer it was hotter than usual, and the carpenter found himself unable to sleep. Instead of tossing about on his cushions, making himself more uncomfortable than he was already, the man wisely got up and drank some coffee and lit his long pipe. Suddenly his eye fell on some pieces of wood in a corner and, being very clever with his fingers, he had soon set up a perfect statue of a girl about fourteen years old. This so pleased and quieted him that he grew quite drowsy, and going back to bed fell fast asleep.

'But the carpenter was not the only person who lay awake that night. Thunder was in the air, and the tailor became so restless that he thought he would go downstairs and cool his feet in the little fountain outside the garden door. To reach the door he had to pass through the room where the carpenter had sat and smoked, and against the wall he beheld standing a beautiful girl. He stood speechless for an instant before he ventured to touch her hand, when, to his amazement, he found that she was fashioned out of wood.

'"Ah! I can make you more beautiful still," said he. And fetching from a shelf a roll of yellow silk which he had bought that day from a merchant, he cut and draped and stitched, till at length a lovely robe clothed the slender figure. When this was finished, the restlessness had departed from him, and he went back to bed.

'As dawn approached the student arose and prepared to go to the mosque with the first ray of sunlight. But, when he saw the maiden standing there, he fell on his knees and lifted his hands in ecstasy.

'"Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air, clad in the beauty of ten thousand stars," he murmured to himself. "Surely a form so rare was never meant to live without a soul." And forthwith he prayed with all his might that life should be breathed into it.

'And his prayer was heard, and the beautiful statue became a living girl, and the three men all fell in love with her, and each desired to have her to wife.

'Now,' said the nightingale, 'to which of them did the maiden really belong? It seems to me that the carpenter had the best right to her.'

'Oh, but the student would never have thought of praying that she might be given a soul had not the tailor drawn attention to her loveliness by the robe which he put upon her,' answered the prince, who guessed what he was expected to say; and they soon set up quite a pretty quarrel. Suddenly the princess, furious that neither of them alluded to the part played by the student, quite forgot her vow of silence and cried loudly:

'Idiots that you are! how could she belong to any one but the student? If it had not been for him, all that the others did would have gone for nothing! Of course it was he who married the maiden!' And as she spoke the seven veils fell from her, and she stood up, the fairest princess that the world has ever seen.

'You have won me,' she said smiling, holding out her hand to the prince.

And so they were married; and after the wedding-feast was over they sent for the old woman whose pitcher the prince had broken so long ago, and she dwelt in the palace, and became nurse to their children, and lived happily till she died.

[Adapted from *Türkische Volksmärchen aus Stambul gesammelt, übersetzt und eingeleitet* von Dr. Ignaz Künos. Brilla, Leiden.]

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